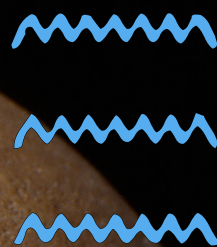


NILE



DISCOVER ANCIENT EGYPT TODAY

WIN
CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLES
by **Bob Brier**

Part 2 : Queens
OF THE NILE

How to read
TOMB SYMBOLS

Top 5 Discoveries
OF 2016

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THE MISSING TOMBS

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15

2016's TOP 5

Jeff Burzacott

It's been another big year of field work in Egypt, with new discoveries from Aswan to the Nile Delta—as well as in museums around the world. But what will be judged as the most important of 2016?



29

MURDER ON THE NILE

Leslie D. Black

Treachery. Black Magic. Murder. One of Egypt's last formidable Pharaohs is about to be caught in a series of sinister events leading inexorably to his violent demise. This is the harem conspiracy against Ramesses III.



36

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLES

Bob Brier

PART ONE

Extracts from Bob Brier's new book, "Cleopatra's Needles", telling the amazing story of how London got her obelisk. Plus you can win a copy of the book, personally signed by Bob Brier.

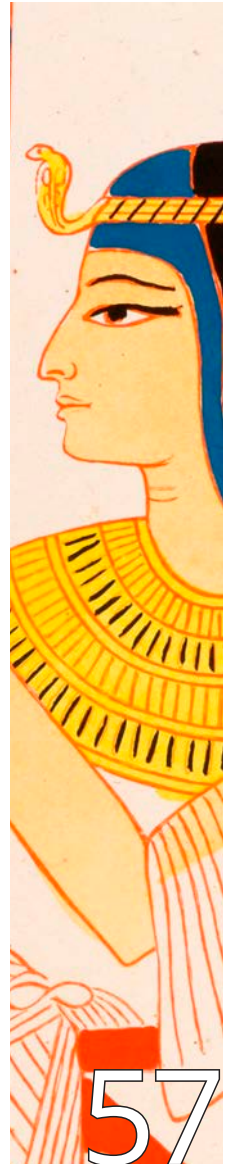


47

SYMBOLISM IN NEW KINGDOM TOMBS

Jaap Jan Hemmes

Ancient Egyptian art had both form and function. The fabulously painted walls inside New Kingdom tomb chapels were designed to deliver the deceased safe and well to the other side. While the images can be stunning, their symbols wielded some powerful magic.



57

QUEENS OF THE NILE

Jeff Burzacott

PART TWO

The Dutch National Museum of Antiquities presents amazing artefacts from the celebrated queens of Egypt's Golden Age—New Kingdom—including rare objects from the tomb of Nefertari.

NILE



PHOTO: OLE HAUPT / NY CARLSBERG GLYPTOTEK COPENHAGEN. Cat: AEIN 1663
(PHOTO REVERSED ON COVER)

FEBRUARY /
MARCH 2017

- 4 Map of Egypt
- 5 Timeline
- 6 From the Editor
- 7 **NILE** Shorts
- 8 On This Day
- 64 Exhibitions
- 66 **NILE** Style
- 68 Coming Up
- 68 Contact **NILE**
- 69 Looking Back

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OUR COVER

PORTRAIT OF A PRINCESS

This wonderful little portrait is thought to be Princess Meritaten, the eldest daughter of the reformationist pharaoh, Akhenaten, and his wife (and possibly pharaoh-to-be) Nefertiti.

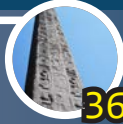

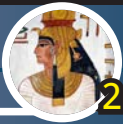





The eyes and eyebrows were originally inlaid with glass and coloured stone.

But why the odd, elongated head? We explore the various theories from page 60.

NILE



NASA, MODIS LAND SCIENCE TEAM

	YEAR	DYNASTY	IN THIS ISSUE ...
PTOLEMAIC PERIOD	332-30BC	Ptolemaic	 36
		30	
LATE PERIOD	525-404	27	
	664-525	26	
		25	
3 RD I.P.	945-715	22 23	
	1069-945	21	
NEW KINGDOM	1186-1069	20	 29
	1295-1186	19	 24, 58
	1550-1295	18	 16, 25  8
2 ND I.P.	1650-1550	15 16 17 A*	
MIDDLE KINGDOM	1795-1650	13 14	
	1985-1795	12	 19
	2125-1985	9-10 11	
1 ST I.P.		7-8	
OLD KINGDOM	2345-2181	6	
	2494-2345	5	
	2613-2494	4	 11
	2686-2613	3	
EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD	2890-2686	2	
		1	 22

(A* = Abydos Dynasty)



THERE ARE SOME SUN TEMPLES out there somewhere. Abusir is one of the large west bank cemeteries of ancient Memphis, around 16 kilometres (10 miles) south of the famous Great Pyramids of Giza.

Although the history of the Abusir necropolis began in the 2nd Dynasty, it wasn't until King Userkaf, the first ruler of the 5th Dynasty (ca. 2494 B.C.), chose to build here that the Abusir skyline changed forever.

However, what Userkaf commissioned wasn't a pyramid; he had nestled his final resting place close to the world's first pyramid, that of Djoser at Saqqara. At Abusir Userkaf was raising something new—a sun temple. The sun temple was a large, squat obelisk, raised on a grand pedestal, and connected with the worship of the rising and setting sun. Each day the sun sank below the western horizon into the underworld where it faced a dangerous journey before rising triumphantly, reborn at dawn. It was a powerful symbol of cyclical resurrection.

For the next 70 years, Abusir was a hive of activity as the pyramids of Userkaf's sons, Sahure and Neferirkare, as well as his grandson, Niuserre raised their own pyramids and sun temples here.

Buried in the Abusir sand are also the barely-started pyramids of 5th Dynasty pharaohs whose short-lived reigns saw their grand monuments hastily sealed, just a few courses of stone above the desert.

Six sun temples are mentioned in inscriptions, although only the ruins of Userkaf's and Niuserre's have been discovered. Hopefully, buried out there somewhere lay four more sun temples, waiting to feel Ra's rays once again.

A few years ago I took my twelve-year-old son, Dylan, on a father-son adventure through Egypt.

As we were walking across the desert between the Abusir pyramids and the Sun Temple of Niuserre, I noticed these two marker stones (above).

It was very exciting. I wondered if they marked an ancient processional route between the pyramids and the sun temples. Or perhaps they were placed there by Egyptologists to point out something significant that still lay beneath the sand.

When I asked our guide about them, he smiled. I think he rather enjoyed telling us they were goal posts for the local boys' football matches!

As always, I hope you love the fascinating stories and stunning photography in this, *Nile Magazine* issue number six.

Enjoy your Nile time! ☰

Jeff Burzacott
editor@nilemagazine.com.au

Errata

Oops. Last issue we misattributed the first "Queens of the Nile" article to Charlotte Booth. Regular readers will know that Charlotte's been a wonderful contributor to Nile. We love her articles. That just wasn't one of them. We also forgot to thank Tamas Sajo and Ferkó from *riowang.blogspot.com* for their kind permission to reprint the wonderful 1760 Hungarian map of Egypt. Thanks guys!

© JOHN LAMBERTON, THE NELSON ATKINS MUSEUM, KANSAS CITY; WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON TRUST



Heavy is The Head That Wears The Crown

WE ARE USED TO SEEING the mighty pharaohs portrayed in a fairly consistent, idealised way: strong, confident, ageless.

But around 1870 B.C., during Egypt's Middle Kingdom, the 12th Dynasty king, Senusret III, had a totally different idea for the image he wanted to present to the gods.

While his body remained athletic and youthful, the king's expression now held a sombre mood, as though the burdens of caring for his people and the responsibilities of kingship were getting him down.

As this quartz head (above) shows, the lined forehead, heavy-lidded eyes and downturned mouth all combine to make Senusret III look old and tired.

Thoughts vary on the statement Senusret was trying to make; from authoritarian and determined, to pessimistic and anxious, and even old and wise.

The carving is so expressive it has been suggested that this may be one of those rare instances where we can look upon a reasonable likeness of the king.

However, Senusret's new style is more likely to have been an ideological device; statues of Senusret's son, Amenemhat III, also look like he took the job rather seriously. Even portraits of early 13th Dynasty kings display elements of Senusret's innovative style. As time went on, however, royal portraiture started smiling again and drifted back to a more traditional style, where the face and not just the body, showed a stoic, confident man in his prime.

Recently, a team from the Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania, announced the discovery at Abydos of a large underground vault, built to house a full-sized boat. The boat burial is close to and contemporary with the subterranean tomb of Senusret III. Read more about the new discovery from page 19.

ON THIS DAY

6 February 1986

The Tomb of Maya and Meryt

“We were totally unprepared for the sight that met our eyes:
a room, full of carved reliefs, painted a rich golden yellow!”

British Egyptologist, Professor Geoffrey T. Martin

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM of Antiquities in Leiden (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, RMO) knew that Maya was out there somewhere, lost beneath the sands of Saqqara.

In fact, they had known since 1828, when a magnificent double statue of Maya and his wife Meryt became one of the jewels of their growing collection (the museum had been founded just 10 years before).

Maya held two of the most powerful posts in Egypt: Overseer of the Treasury and Overseer of Works during the reigns of at least three 18th Dynasty kings: Tutankhamun, Ay and Horemheb. This made

him responsible for Egypt's home affairs during the period following the “heresy” of King Akhenaten who had closed the great temples of Amun and adored instead the sun god, Aten.

During Tutankhamun's reign, it was Maya who set about reestablishing the traditional cults while his colleague, General Horemheb, ran campaigns to pacify Egypt's external threats and bring rebellious outer territories under control. Later, Maya was responsible for the hurried burial of Tutankhamun when the young king died suddenly.

Given the responsibility and resources at his disposal, it could be safely reasoned that his tomb



MAYA AND MERYT FACE ETERNITY —BUT NOT EACH OTHER

The distinguished couple, glorious in their finest clothes and best wigs, sit waiting to receive food offerings that keep their 'ka' spirits nourished in the afterlife.

Such restrained elegance shows a return to the more traditional artistic canon after the sensual, dynamic styles introduced by Akhenaten just 20 years earlier.

Important events from February and March in history

would be a lavish affair. But no one really knew where Maya's tomb was.

In 1975 Professor Geoffrey Martin of the Egypt Exploration Society and Jacobus van Dijk from the RMO led a British-Dutch team with one mission: find Maya.

It took 11 years.

Martin and van Dijk's only clue was a 132-year-old map of Saqqara made for Karl Lepsius.

In 1843 the German Egyptologist had surveyed the area and documented the location of several tombs, including one of a Treasurer called Maya. It had since been swallowed by the sand.

Using the Lepsius map, the team started with an area marked by a promising rectangular depression in the sand—the outline of a buried tomb courtyard.

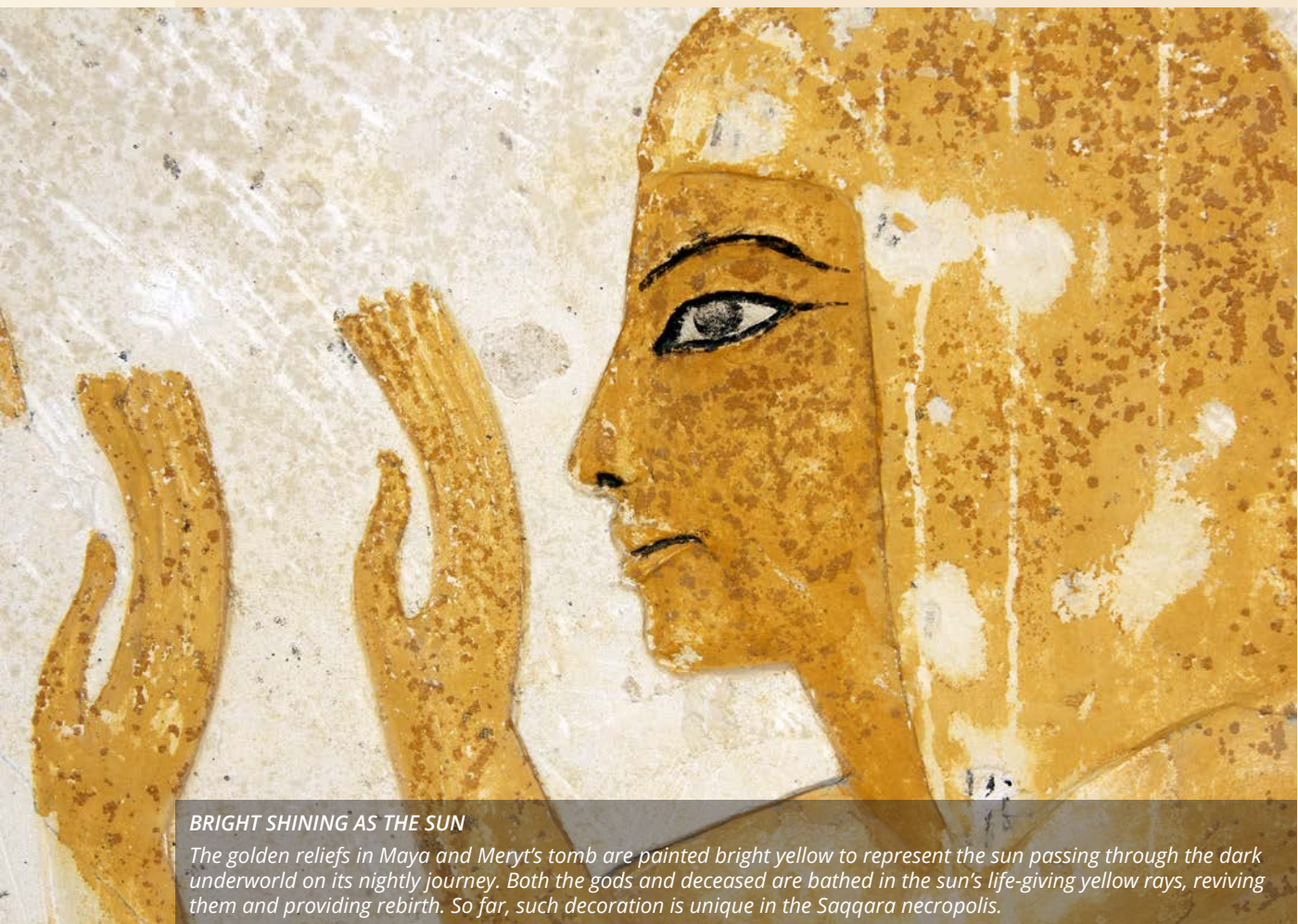
An exciting discovery was made almost immediately: a large, stone column. It didn't bear the name of Maya, however. Instead, Martin and van Dijk had found the tomb of the future pharaoh Horemheb, built when Horemheb was a general under Tutankhamun.

Over the next decade the team continued the search for Maya's tomb and discovered a neighbourhood of 18th and 19th Dynasty tomb-chapels. Each consisted of a temple-like structure above ground (complete with grand pylons), with a burial chamber deep below.

All of the tombs had been ransacked in antiquity, and below ground was a rabbit warren of passageways made by robbers, as well Late Period (ca. 747–332 B.C.) poorer internments.

Martin and van Dijk were following one of these intrusive passageways leading from the tomb of an 18th Dynasty officer from Horemheb's army named Ramose, when they suddenly realised they were in an adjacent tomb. The passageway led to a vertical shaft with stairs that opened up to a room full of carved sunk reliefs, painted a rich, golden yellow. It was Maya. They had ended up entering their sought-after tomb from below.

Despite its initial, dazzling appearance, Maya and Meryt's tomb was in a sorry state. The couple had many intruders during their long journey into



BRIGHT SHINING AS THE SUN

The golden reliefs in Maya and Meryt's tomb are painted bright yellow to represent the sun passing through the dark underworld on its nightly journey. Both the gods and deceased are bathed in the sun's life-giving yellow rays, reviving them and providing rebirth. So far, such decoration is unique in the Saqqara necropolis.

© JAAP JAN HEEMES

ON THIS DAY

“I was one who carried out the plans of the king of my time
and did not neglect what he hand commanded...

Overseer of the Treasury of the Lord of the Two Lands,
Maya, true of voice.”

From the pylon gateway of the tomb of Maya and Meryt, Saqqara

the afterlife; the tomb had been used for a number of Late Period burials, and there was even evidence that Coptic monks had occupied it as well.

Ancient thieves had also wreaked havoc. Most of the walls with their fine decorations had been smashed in the search for hidden chambers. What the intruders hadn't attacked, nature had seen to.

The tomb's chambers were some 21 metres below the surface. Its walls were lined with fine limestone slabs, tightly wedged between the floor and ceiling and cemented in with plaster. It was on these slabs that the golden reliefs were carved. Unfortunately, three thousand years of pressure bearing down on the walls had caused most of them to fracture, with

hundreds of flakes of decorated limestone scattered across the ground. Large cracks across the ceiling warned of an iffy future.

Maya's tomb needed rescuing, and the solution they created was ingenious. Rather than try and restore the reliefs in situ, the decorated limestone slabs were brought up to the surface and reconstructed in three purpose-built rooms, dug directly beneath the tomb chapel's large open courtyard.

Thanks to the untiring searching and amazing repair work by the British-Dutch team, Maya and Merit's beautifully restored reliefs are now secured for the future—and we don't need to clamber 21 metres underground to admire them.



MAYA'S FAMILY

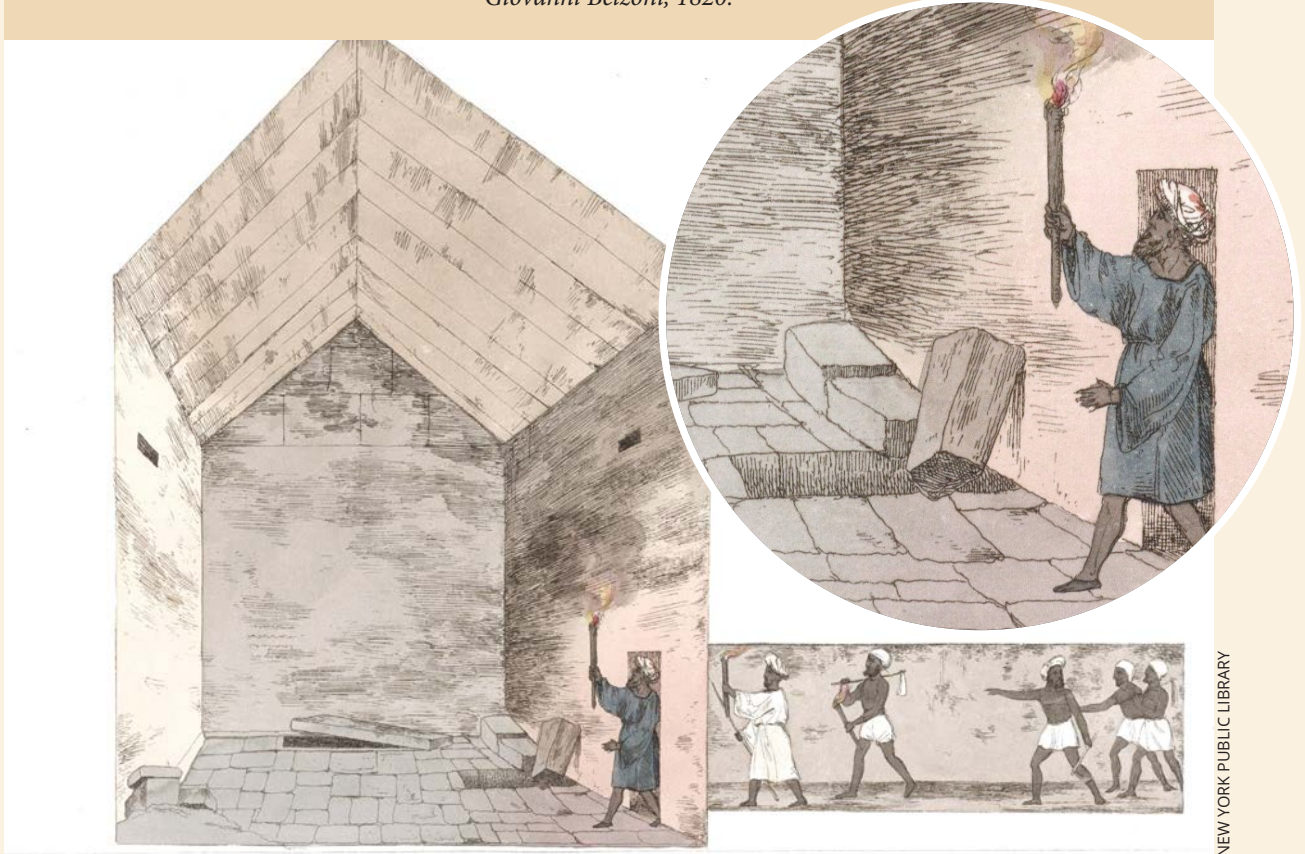
Maya and Meryt's tomb and chapel have revealed much about Tutankhamun's treasurer and his family. Meryt passed away first, and since the couple had two daughters and no son (who would usually have taken care of the funeral), when Maya died, his burial rites were led by his half-brother, Nahuher. After the interment, Nahuher left the tomb in the care of a professional priest named Yamen.

2 March 1818

The Discovery of Khafre's Burial Chamber

"My eyes were fixed on that enormous mass, which for so many ages has baffled the conjectures of ancient and modern writers."

Giovanni Belzoni, 1820.



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THE MOMENT OF DISCOVERY

Belzoni found Khafre's sarcophagus empty, save for a "quantity of earth and stones". Closer inspection of the "rubbish" revealed some bones. Were these the sad remains of a great king? The bones were sent off to William Clift, curator of the Royal College of Surgeons' Hunterian Museum in London, who declared they were from a bull. It is likely the bones were placed in the tomb long after it had been robbed, perhaps as an offering to Osiris by priests honouring the missing king, or as part of a later, intrusive burial. Sadly the bones can't be dated today as the College was bombed during World War II and over two-thirds of the collection were lost.

WHEN GIOVANNI BELZONI arrived at Giza in early 1818 he had one thing on his mind: discovering what lay inside the Second Pyramid; that of the 4th Dynasty pharaoh, Khafre.

King Khafre's pyramid is almost as vast as the Great Pyramid of his father, Khufu. However, while Khufu's monument had been torn open centuries ago, the second of the giant Giza pyramids protected its secrets.

So far as anyone knew, the pyramid was inviolate. As Belzoni later wrote: "*Herodotus himself was deceived by the Egyptian priests, when told there were*

no chambers in it."

Belzoni first came to Egypt three years earlier as an entrepreneur, hoping to make his fortune by selling a hydraulic irrigation device he had invented. When that venture failed Belzoni was introduced to the British consul to Egypt, Henry Salt, who hired him to collect antiquities for the British Museum. At Giza in 1818 however, Belzoni was digging for himself.

He quickly enlisted an eager workforce of some 80 locals and began probing the centre of the north face, buried under sand and rubble. It wasn't long before an entrance was revealed.

ON THIS DAY

"After thirty days exertion I had the pleasure of finding myself in the way to the central chamber of one of the two great pyramids of Egypt, which have long been the admiration of beholders."

Giovanni Belzoni, 1820.



© JEFFREY ROSS BURZACOTT

BELZONI'S HANDIWORK

These are the two entrances revealed by Belzoni's workmen. On the right, the robbers' hole dug at the centre of the north face, and on the left, the true entrance, 11 metres (38 feet) up from the base. Once inside, the layout of the pyramid's structure was revealed, and Belzoni realised there was another entrance, concealed in the bedrock 68 metres (223 feet) north of the pyramid. The granite plug that blocked it was blasted apart in 1837 by English army officer, Colonel Vyse. It is this opening that is used by visitors today.

Excitement turned to disappointment, however, as Belzoni later recalled, *"It is evidently a forced passage, executed by some powerful hand, and appears intended to find a way to the centre of the pyramid."*

The diggers had found a robbers' hole; one with an incredibly crumbly and fragile ceiling that threatened to collapse and fall in on them. Digging stopped while Belzoni considered his next move, anxious about what failure might do to his reputation: *"I was confident, that a failure in such an attempt would have drawn on me the laughter of all the world for my presumption in undertaking such a task..."*

For inspiration, Belzoni returned to Khufu's Great

Pyramid, where his great eye for detail picked up that the entrance on the north face was not dead-centre but offset some 24 feet to the east. Perhaps Khafre's pyramid followed the same plan?

Belzoni set his workers a new task: dig to the east. Encouragingly Belzoni noticed that the face of Khafre's pyramid was sunken slightly around this point. The locals, however, were less hopeful than their employer: *"As to expectation that the entrance might be found, they had none; and I often heard them utter, in a low voice, the word 'magnoon,' in plain English, madman."*

The "madman's" men continued digging, however, and at noon on 2nd March, finally uncovered the

“My undertaking was of no small importance: it consisted of an attempt to penetrate into one of the great pyramids of Egypt...”

Giovanni Belzoni, 1820.



© JEFFREY ROSS BURZACOTT

EGYPT'S MOST FAMOUS GRAFFITI

The burial chamber of Khafre's pyramid was dug from the limestone bedrock, with the tops of the walls level with the outside courtyard; huge pented limestone slabs forming the roof. The great bulk of Khafre's pyramid—unlike his predecessor's—is solid masonry.

Inside the chamber, Belzoni's attempt at immortalisation could easily be removed by conservators, but it is now considered part of the history of the pyramid, and so remains for visitors to discover today.

entrance that had eluded all other explorers. The pyramid's entrance turned out to be over 12 metres (38 feet) from the centre line.

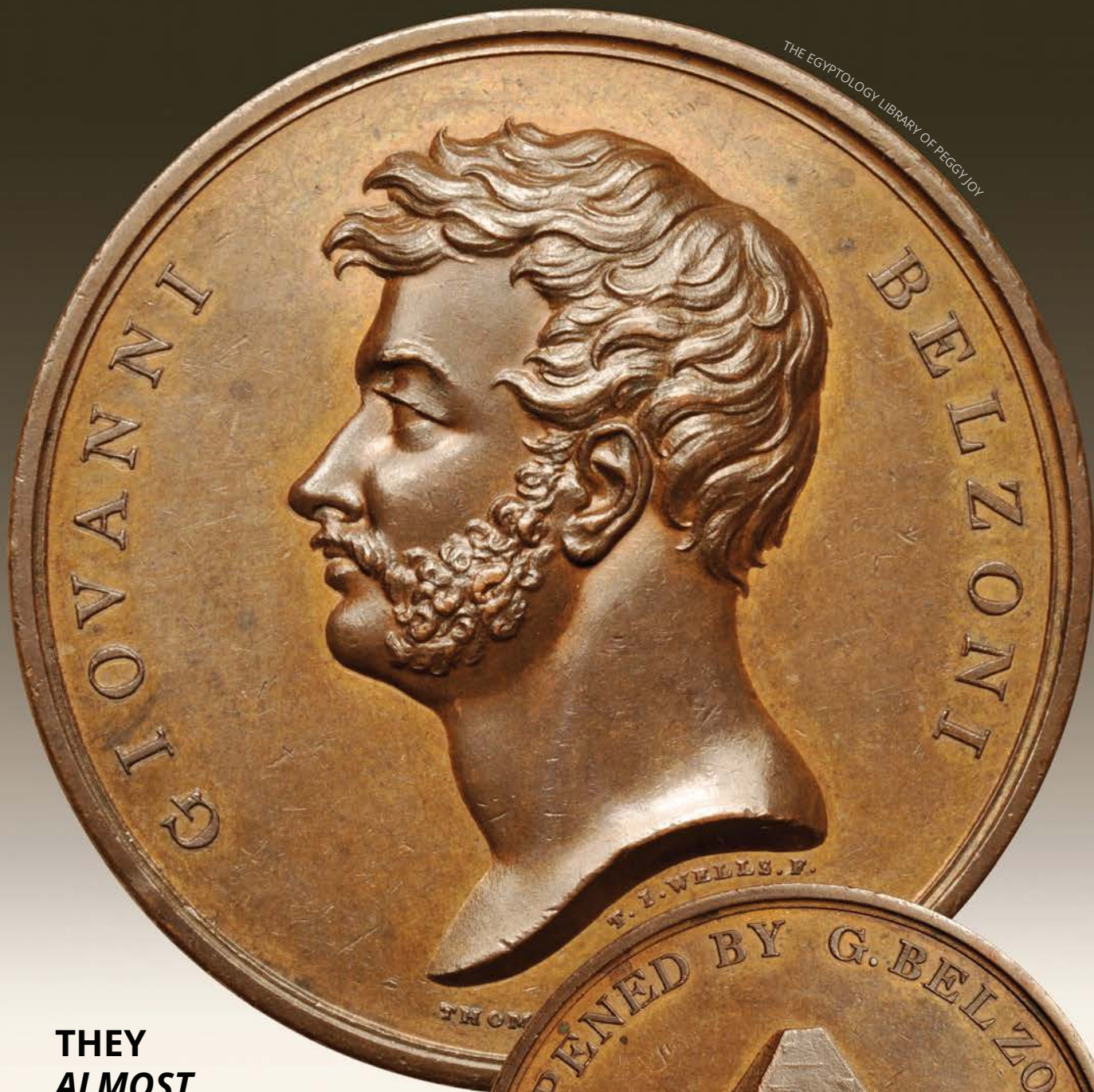
Behind the blocking stones was a granite corridor descending through the body of the pyramid, which ended at a massive granite portcullis, some 1.8 metres (six feet) high and 38 cm (1 foot, 3 inches) thick. This was inched slowly upward, using larger and larger stones to hold it in place, before Belzoni could continue. On the other side, the descending corridor met with a horizontal passageway that led to the burial chamber itself.

As Belzoni moved through the descending corridor, however, he encountered the end of the robbers' hole. The ancient thieves had tunnelled around the granite portcullis.

It was no doubt that with a sense of foreboding Belzoni entered the burial chamber. It was empty, save for a large, polished black granite sarcophagus sunk into the floor at the chamber's west end.

Not only had the robbers' hole predicted that Belzoni hadn't been the first, but written on the wall above the sarcophagus, was the boast of an earlier intruder: “The Master Mohammed Ahmed, stonecutter, has opened them; and the Master Othman attended this [opening]; and the King Alij Mohammed at first [from the beginning] to the closing up.”

These Arab explorers had beaten Belzoni to it by more than a thousand years. Disappointed, but still proud of his achievement, Belzoni added his own inscription to the chamber: “Scoperta da [Discovered by] G. Belzoni. 2. Mar. 1818.”

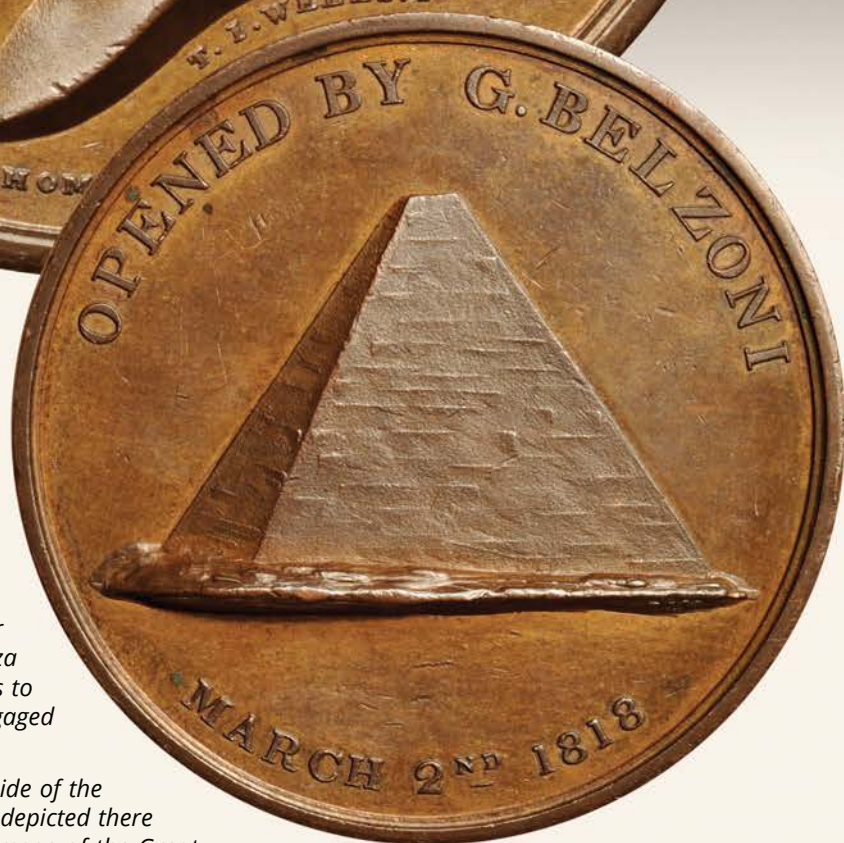


THEY ALMOST GOT IT RIGHT

Giovanni Belzoni left Egypt in September of 1819, arriving the next year in London, where he was keen to publish his "Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries Within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia," which would be received with wide acclaim.

In Birmingham, England, in 1821, Sir Edward Thomason and Charles Jones chose to honour Belzoni's opening of the Second Pyramid at Giza with this medallion. They solicited subscriptions to cover the cost, and medallist T. I. Wells was engaged to engrave the dies.

Although the date of the event on the reverse side of the medal (March 2, 1818), is correct, the pyramid depicted there is not—the engraver mistakenly provided an image of the Great Pyramid of Khufu, which has its upper seven metres (23 feet) missing.



What were the Top 5 Egyptological discoveries of 2016?

NILE TOP 5

2016 was another big year in Egyptology.

I'm starting to wonder if we should perhaps have put together a "Top 20" instead! Let's look back at just a handful of this year's discoveries and findings:

- ≡ The Scan Pyramids Project gave us the possibility of hidden "voids" inside the Great Pyramid (see *NILE* #5).
- ≡ It turns out that the Great Pyramid, in fact is a little "wonky"—it is more of a "Great Parallelogram".
- ≡ There was the discovery of the Deir el-Medina mummy with the first tattoos that feature pictures (cows, lotus, baboons and Wedjat eye), and not just abstract designs.
- ≡ An Old Kingdom boat burial was discovered at Abusir, along with a stone pot fragment containing the name of Huni, the shadowy last king of the 3rd Dynasty (ca. 2640 B.C.), father of Sneferu and grandfather of Khufu.

So, onto the Top 5. These are the ones which, in the humble opinion of your editor, throw new light onto the story of ancient Egypt and those who made it their home. Some have confirmed old theories or helped settle old debates. And some leave us with the opportunity of more discoveries to come.

You might be surprised to see that not many of the Top 5 are the result of the recent shifting of sand. History often hides in plain sight, and it is often said that some of the biggest discoveries are made in museum basements. Developments in technology like CT scans and DNA sequencers help us extract new findings from old collections.

Of course, any shortlist like this is highly arguable. Forgive me if your well-deserving favourite didn't make the list. You are probably right.

Jeff Burzacott, Editor

TUTANKHAMUN'S "COSMIC" DAGGER

Why did Tutankhamun have a dagger made from a meteorite?

Dr. Diane Johnson

SCIENTISTS HAVE LONG SPECULATED that the ancient Egyptians used metal from meteorites to make iron objects. Last year, new analysis of a dagger found in Tutankhamun's tomb gave us strong evidence that this was the case—and that the Egyptians knew the iron had come from the sky. But why did they use such an unusual source for the metal when there's plenty of iron here on Earth?

Until recently, we didn't think that the ancient Egyptians were particularly good at producing iron objects until late in their history, around 500 B.C. There's no archaeological evidence for significant iron working anywhere in the Nile Valley. Even the large amounts of iron-rich smelting waste products found in the Delta region could actually have been produced by attempts to make copper. When Tutankhamun died—800 years earlier—iron was a rarer material than gold.

The most common natural source of metal iron on Earth is iron ores—rocks that contain iron chemically bonded to other elements. These need to be processed by heating them with other materials (smelting) to extract a low-quality form of iron, which is then beaten with hammers to remove impurities. This requires considerable know-how, effort and tools that we have no evidence for in ancient Egypt.


There were abundant supplies of iron ore in both Egypt and the Sinai peninsula and textual sources indicate that Egyptians were aware of the metal from early in their history. But the ore was mostly used to create pigments for art and makeup. One explanation for this may be that the readily accessible iron ores were of poor quality so couldn't be worked into more useful metal.

Interstellar source

But iron doesn't just come from iron ore. We have evidence that numerous prehistoric societies worldwide which did not have access to ores or knowledge of smelting made use of metallic iron found in occasional meteorites. This precious gift from nature still required shaping into a useful form, often resulting in very basic iron objects, such as small thin metal pieces that could be used as blades or bent into shapes.

If ancient Egyptians knew that iron could be found in meteorites that came from the sky—the place of the gods—it may have been symbolically important to them. As a result, they could have seen all iron as a divine material that wasn't appropriate to work into a practical, everyday form and that should be reserved only for high-status people.

Meteorites may have even played a more direct role in state religion. The Benben stone worshipped in the sun temple of the god Ra at Heliopolis is thought to have possibly been a meteorite. The word *benben* is derived from the verb *weben*, meaning “to shine”.

The ancient language also offers clues as to how iron was perceived by Egyptians—and that they knew meteorites were a source of the metal. The earliest hieroglyphic word for iron was greatly debated by translators, who frequently confused the words for copper and iron. The word *bi-a*  was eventually translated as “iron”, but could easily have referred to a range of hard, dense, iron-like materials.

Bi-a was used in many texts including the funerary Pyramid Texts, early religious writings dating from approximately 2375 B.C. (but likely to have been composed far earlier), carved on the internal walls of some pyramids. These textual references to iron

In
Tutankhamun's
time iron was a
rarer material
than gold

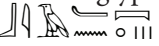


The iron blade was studied by using non-invasive X-ray fluorescence spectrometry—a technique that allows researchers to pretty much look “inside” any object. While iron from traditional blades contains around 4% nickel on average, the scan revealed that this blade is composed of 11% nickel, similar to nickel-rich meteors which have been collected over the years.



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connect it with aspects of the sky and with the bones of the dead king who will live forever as an undying star in the sky.

From the beginning of the 19th Dynasty (ca. 1295 B.C.) a new hieroglyphic word for iron appeared: *bia-n-pet* , which literally translates as “iron from the sky”. Why this new word appears in this exact form at this time is unknown, but it was later applied to all metallic iron. An obvious explanation for the sudden emergence of the word would be a major impact event or large shower of meteorites.

This would have left little uncertainty as to where the mysterious iron came from. One possible candidate event is the Gebel Kamil meteorite impact in southern Egypt. Although its exact date remains unknown, based upon nearby archaeology, we know it occurred within the past 5000 years.

Ritual significance

Iron is also connected to ritual artefacts such as those used in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, a ritual performed at the entrance of a tomb designed to transform the mummy into a latent being with the potential for life. Later texts, including temple inventories, that reference the equipment used in this ceremony refer to the iron blades used as “the two stars”. It may be that iron was allowed an important role in this ceremony because of the association of iron with meteorites, powerful natural phenomena whose own inherent power might increase the potency of the ritual.

We also know that iron dagger blades were important enough to be mentioned in diplomatic correspondence. The best-known example is a letter from King Tushratta of Mitanni (northern Iraq and Syria) detailing a dowry of his daughter who was to be sent as a bride to Tutankhamun's grandfather, Amenhotep III

(ca. 1360 B.C.). This letter intriguingly refers to a dagger blade of “habalkinu”, a poorly documented word derived from the ancient Hittite language which some linguists have translated as “steel”.

There is no other known example of such expertly worked iron from ancient Egypt as the iron dagger blade from Tutankhamun's tomb. Compared to the other iron objects it is stylistically and technologically an odd one out—from the iron in this tomb and of earlier Egyptian tombs. Was “habalkinu” a reference to very high quality iron, such as meteorite iron?

We know of numerous references to King Tushratta sending iron daggers to important people, implying that a knowledge of high-quality iron working was at his disposal at around this time, but does this mean that the iron blade in Tutankhamun's tomb originated outside Egypt?

Only further detailed analysis of the chemistry and microstructure of other artefacts will tell us if meteorites were a common source of the iron that the ancient Egyptians produced. We also need to determine when, where and how the smelting of terrestrial iron ores started in Egypt to further guide us in our knowledge of the origins, evolution and specific techniques of ancient Egyptian metalworking technology. By combining this with our knowledge of the cultural importance of iron, we can start to develop a realistic understanding of the true value of this metal in ancient Egypt.

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Thanks go to Dr. Daniela Comelli of the Department of Physics at the Polytechnic University of Milan, and Dr. Mohamed Gamal Rashed of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

The decorated gold handle of Tutankhamun's iron-bladed dagger. As stunning as it is, when Howard Carter found the dagger on the right thigh of the king's mummy, he was more impressed with the blade:

“The astonishing and unique feature of this beautiful weapon is that the blade is of iron, still bright and resembling steel!”




A SHIP IN THE DESERT

Senusret III's royal boat burial and watercraft tableau

JOSEF WEGNER AND HIS TEAM from the Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania, have had some good dig seasons at Abydos.

In 2014 they uncovered the tomb and battle-scarred skeleton of a “lost king”, Senebkay. His forgotten Abydos dynasty flourished briefly during the early Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1650 B.C.) when Egypt was no longer governed by one great pharaoh, but instead broken into several regions with local rulers running their own affairs.

The kings of this short-lived “lost” dynasty placed their burial ground in the shadow of a pyramid-shaped peak in the western cliffs of South Abydos which they called the “Mountain of Anubis”  .

This sacred ground was shared by earlier Middle Kingdom pharaohs including Senusret III (Dynasty 12, ca. 1874–1855 B.C.), and it was near Senusret's tomb that a unique discovery was made late last year.

Senusret III had already built a mud-brick pyramid at Dahshur, northeast of Sneferu's Red Pyramid, when he commissioned a hidden subterranean tomb at the foot of the Mountain of Anubis. It may have been a growing interest in the Amduat and the cult of Osiris, whose Abydos “tomb” was being restored at this time, that led to the decision.

At over 240 metres (800 feet) long, Senusret's is one of the largest royal tombs ever built in ancient Egypt, although, as the Penn Museum says, perhaps one of the least well understood.

Ever since its discovery in 1902, Senusret III's underground structure at Abydos was thought to be a cenotaph: a symbolic tomb, with the king having been buried in his pyramid at Dahshur. However, the current excavations suggest that Senusret III chose to spend eternity much closer to Osiris.

The Penn Museum was excavating 100 metres to the southeast of Senusret's tomb when they encountered another burial. This one, however, wasn't human. The team had unearthed a large vault that once held a full-sized, 18 metre-long wooden boat. It was likely



One of the boats in the “fleet” depicted on the north wall of the boat tomb.

Some of the boats were shown with their sails open, making use of predominant north winds for sailing against the current. Others have the sails furled, depicting the boat heading north using the river current.

buried intact, with its hull, decking and possibly its cabin to help the deceased pharaoh travel to the after-life in regal style.

The boat was possibly one of the vessels in the royal funeral cortege, arriving at Abydos in solemn procession, carrying the body of the king.

But for a few badly-decayed planks, the boat was gone. It was most likely plundered for its wood, a valuable prize in a land with no forests.

What caught the researchers' eyes, however, was a striking tableau of boats—over 120 in all—carved into the white-washed plaster walls of the chamber, forming



(ABOVE)

An array of boats on the north wall of the boat vault.

The boats are in all shapes and sizes, drawn with varying levels of skill—or care. The largest boats are nearly 1.5 metres (five feet) in length. The smallest, just 10 cm (four inches).

Some are drawn complete with masts, sails, rigging, cabins, rudders, oars, and in some cases, rowers. At the other end of the scale are very simple designs composed of a couple of curving lines to make a hull, and a basic cabin.

(BELOW)

The interior of the boat building, looking east towards the Nile, at the end of the 2014/15 dig season.

The floor of the boat building was carved with a 3-metre-wide hull-shaped cavity, designed to cradle the hull of a boat, around 18 metres long.

After the Middle Kingdom, the practice of boat burials died out, to be replaced with something much easier: stocking the royal tomb with wooden models. These could be magically activated to serve the same purpose.



a mural that stretches some 25 metres (82 feet). Remaining parts of the vaulted ceiling reveal that there were many more boats decorating that area as well. The people who carved them may have actually stood on the sacred boat to gain access to the roof.

While the boat building was first excavated in 2014, Project Director of the Abydos excavations, Josef Wegner, recently reported on the discovery in (appropriately enough), the *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*.

In fact, the boat building was first detected in 1901 when Egyptologist Arthur Weigall was doing exploratory work in the area. He exposed the building's barrel-vaulted roof but was hampered by the damaged condition of the vault, parts of which collapsed. Weigall didn't dig any further, but he did spot the boats on the walls:

"Upon the whitewashed walls of the burial chamber a number of drawings of boats had been scratched in later times, some of which are of interest."

Unfortunately, instead of detailed plans, only a rough sketch was made, and the site was forgotten for over a century.

There are a number of theories as to who scratched the boats into the walls—and why. It may be that the people involved in the burial rituals surrounding the boat made their mark to commemorate the occasion.

Perhaps they served as a kind of votive graffiti, made by people who were keen on, as Dr. Wegner states, "establishing personal connections" with the boat, and through it, the king.

However, Dr. Wegner thinks it is more likely that they were made by the same people who hauled the boat up from the river and across the desert to its mud-brick tomb.

One thing that is certain is that the boats don't form a unified scene such as in official decorations in tombs or on the decorated causeways of the pyramid complexes of the Old Kingdom. Most of the boats are drawn at random; sometimes they even overlap. And they were done in a hurry. As Dr. Wegner states, "The amount of time represented in creating even the more elaborated images is minimal."

For the Penn Museum team, there is no shortage of research to be done, and still plenty of work to do at Abydos. A promising cluster of buried buildings nearby with similar dimensions to the excavated boat building suggest that there are more boats to be found.

Love to see Senusret III's Abydos tomb in person? You could be there with Dr. Chris Naunton. See the Ancient World Tours ad inside the front cover.



Senusret III's boat would have been buried with great ceremony, and, as part of the ritual, around 145 pottery jars were placed upside down in the trough that leads from the desert surface to the tomb's entrance.

This was a first for Egyptian archaeology.

Some of the jars show evidence of having been turned over while still full of liquid. Dr. Wegner suggests that the large outpouring of liquid running down towards the tomb "was a way of magically floating the boat..."

Alternatively, as the boat may have been pulled up from the Nile to the vault on a wooden sledge, the water from the jars could have been used to solidify and lubricate the sand underneath. The vessels were then buried as part of the ritual.



THE TARKHAN DRESS

The oldest woven garment in the world

ALICE STEVENSON remembers the moment she pulled a thread from the Tarkhan Dress; a garment that she suspected was older than the great pyramids—over 5,000 years old: “It was nerve-wracking.” As curator of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology in London, Dr. Stevenson was about to find out exactly what the museum had been looking after for 103 years.

In 1913 British Egyptologist Flinders Petrie had been excavating a group of mastaba tombs at Tarkhan, an early Dynastic cemetery 60 km (37 miles) south of Cairo. One of the large mud-brick tombs, designated Mastaba 2050, had an impressive niched facade and was clearly built for someone important. It was also almost entirely looted. All that was left were a few alabaster jars, a pot lid, a couple of wooden tool handles, and, just under the sand, what Petrie described as “a great pile of linen cloth.”

Unusually for the time, when a bundle of rags would normally be discarded, Petrie kept everything, and shipped the find off to London. As we now realise, you never know when fresh eye and new technologies can give an artefact a new story, or confirm an old one.

Petrie died in 1942 and never knew that he had rescued something significant in that “great pile”. In fact, neither did anyone else until 1977, when the bundle came to the attention of the Petrie Museum’s Assistant Curator, Rosalind Janssen. Thankfully she was also a textile expert and sent the fabric to the Textile Conservation Workshop at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). From the tangle of cloth came a small, long-sleeved dress with a V-neck and beautiful pleating on the sleeves and bodice.

Based on the tomb and the stone vessels inside, the dress was dated at the time to Dynasty 1 (ca. 3100–2890 B.C.) The dress was in great condition for its age.

Although the hem is missing, the dress is thought to have originally fallen below the knees, and from its size, would have fitted a teenager or young woman.

As the V&A conservators released the cream-coloured dress from thousands of years of caked-on mud, they spotted creases at the elbows and under the arms, and realised that it was inside out. It was as if it had just been pulled up over the head and left on the floor by its young owner, 5,000 years ago.

The date of the dress, however, was contentious. Because Mastaba 2050 had been so thoroughly plundered, it was possible that the collection of linen had been brought in at a much later time and dumped there by looters.

Radiocarbon dating was ruled out in 1977 because to achieve any decent level of accuracy, the test would have needed a piece of the dress the size of a handkerchief. Today, however, a much smaller sample is needed: a small thread just half a centimetre long, weighing a tiny 2.24 mg. Fortunately, linen textiles are ideal to achieve

precise radiocarbon dating results as they are woven from flax fibres which grow over a relatively short time.

Despite Dr. Stevenson’s nerves, the removal of the thread went smoothly, and, in 2015, radiocarbon specialists from Oxford University dated that tiny sample with 95% certainty to between 3482 and 3102 B.C. This confirmed the Tarkhan Dress as not only the oldest woven garment in the world, but also pushed the date of the linen to the beginnings of Dynasty 1, or even earlier.

It’s incredible to think that the Egypt in which this dress’ young owner lived was very different from the one many of us usually imagine: no towering pyramids, no great stone temples, and, possibly, a land where the idea of a single king ruling over a unified kingdom, still belonged to the future.

Petrie called it “a great pile of linen cloth.”



Conservators at the V&A carefully stitched the Tarkhan Dress onto Crepeline, a super fine silk used to protect and stabilise worn textiles. It was then mounted onto a dress form so the dress could be seen the way it was worn in life.

The Tarkhan Dress was couture clothing for Egypt's elite 5,000 years ago. Just like today, those who could afford it—and had the figure for it—enjoyed fine clothing with a tailored fit, cut slim to the body.

COURTESY OF THE PETRIE MUSEUM OF EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY, UCL. ACCESSION NUMBER UC28614B.



NEFERTARI'S LEGS

Have the last remains of this famous queen been identified?

NEFERTARI WAS TALL, around 165 cm (5 foot 5 inches), possibly 10 cm (4 inches) taller than the average Egyptian woman of the time. The sight of this regal woman, counterpart of the pharaoh, standing tall in her elaborate ceremonial attire would have been something to behold.

The gazelle-like stature of Nefertari is one of the outcomes of a recent examination of the artefacts left behind in the queen's tomb by ancient tomb robbers.

When Italian Egyptologist Ernesto Schiaparelli uncovered the tomb in the Valley of the Queens in 1904, it had been worked over by thieves long before. He shipped what the robbers had left behind to the Turin Museum, including a fragmented pair of mummified legs.

The legs could have once belonged to Ramesses II's first Great Royal Wife (ca. 1255 B.C.) They could just as equally have been part of a later, intrusive burial. No one really knew as the legs had never been scientifically studied until last year.

In 2016 a multidisciplinary team across universities in Zurich, Turin, Marseille, York and Adelaide subjected the legs to an unprecedented barrage of tests. They determined the most likely scenario is that the mummified knees truly belong to Queen Nefertari.

From the outset, it must be said that nothing they found proved outright that these mummified legs are Nefertari's, but they do tick a lot of boxes.

Firstly, chemical analysis of the materials used for embalming showed they were consistent with Ramesside mummification traditions.

A pair of finely-made sandals, 29 cm long and typical of the 18th–19th Dynasties, was found in the tomb by Schiaparelli. Their size matched the stature and dimensions of the legs as assessed by measurements of the knees. The sandals' high quality also spoke in favour of royal footwear. If these did belong to

Nefertari, she had a shoe size of 39–40 (U.S. size 9).

X-rays of the left knee pointed to possible traces of calcification, suggesting the legs belonged to someone older than 40 years, quite an advanced age in ancient Egypt. Egyptologists had long believed that Nefertari died after the 24th year of Ramesses II's reign, aged around 40 to 50 years.

Unfortunately, DNA testing was inconclusive as the samples were contaminated, while radiocarbon dating yielded a surprising result—the legs were 200 years older than Nefertari's accepted time.

One possibility was that the remains were from a 17th or 18th Dynasty burial, washed into the tomb after it was left open by thieves. However, the earlier burials are at the bottom of the valley, and it is unlikely they were washed in uphill. It doesn't rule out that earlier, disturbed burials had been piously reinterred in Nefertari's tomb, only to be plundered once again.

The dating discrepancy certainly adds fuel to the "alternative chronology" debate, whereby some historians call for a revision of the accepted dating model of ancient Egyptian kingdoms and dynasties.

To help solve this puzzle, Michael Habicht at the Institute of Evolutionary Medicine, University of Zurich, has a recommendation: "For the future, we strongly suggest radiocarbon dating of other royal and non-royal remains of the Ramesside era, in order to validate or disprove the chronology."

The stunning painting inside Nefertari's tomb shows a beautiful queen, timelessly slender and graceful. This would have been the case regardless of how she actually appeared in real life. It was the prerogative of any wealthy or royal tomb owner to decide how they wished to appear for eternity. However, this new research suggests that, in height at least, Nefertari's image may have actually been closer to the truth.

Intriguingly, the great Ramesses II appears nowhere in his wife's tomb. To find out why, turn to page 58.



FINDS FROM THE TOMB OF NEFERTARI

The tomb of Nefertari (QV 66) fell prey to tomb robbers in antiquity. It was rediscovered in 1904 by the Director of the Turin Museum, Egyptologist, Ernesto Schiaparelli. Shown here are many of the surviving contents, including Nefertari's sandals, wooden casket lids, and a wooden djed pillar from a "magical brick", found in

situ in a wall recess in the burial chamber. There were over three dozen shabti servant figures of resin-painted wood, and, shown in the centre of this photo, two mummified legs. These artefacts became part of the Turin collection and are currently on loan for the acclaimed "Queens of the Nile" exhibition at the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. For more see page 57.



TUTANKHAMUN'S MASK

Was it made for “King” Nefertiti?

IT WOULD BE HARD TO SELECT A “TOP FIVE” for 2016 without at least mentioning the headline-grabbing debate over secret chambers in the tomb of Tutankhamun (KV 62) and the drama surrounding the botched repair job on the king’s spectacular golden mask.

Up until 2015 the general consensus was that there wasn’t much left to discover in Tutankhamun’s tomb. Its riches had been hauled off to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo in the 1920s (where they remain largely unexamined), and the tomb paintings in the one decorated room, the burial chamber, had been thoroughly examined. Or so we thought.

Then, in mid-2015, Dr. Nicholas Reeves dropped a bombshell when he released a paper suggesting that Tutankhamun’s tomb was hiding a secret after all: the undisturbed burial of the tomb’s original owner—Queen Nefertiti, wife of the “renegade” pharaoh, Akhenaten.

Since then the world’s media has been frothing at the prospect of the discovery of the century: the tomb of one of Egypt’s most famous queens.

So what did Nicholas Reeves see? While pouring over ultra high-resolution digital scans of the decorated walls of the burial chamber, Reeves noticed lines in the plasterwork that he believed were the outlines of two sealed doors, “one set within a larger partition wall and both seemingly untouched since antiquity.”

The theory goes that Tutankhamun died in his late teens, well before his own tomb was anywhere near completion. With only 70 days available (the traditional time in which to mummify the king), the next best solution was to open the royal valley’s most recent internment and adapt it for Tutankhamun. That tomb was Nefertiti’s. While the queen slept behind a decorated false wall designed to foil thieves, her tomb’s antechamber was widened and the wall paintings adapted to feature Tutankhamun rather than the queen.

The Egyptian government, notoriously conservative, were surprisingly eager to test the theory. No doubt they hoped that any publicity might help their beleaguered tourism industry.

First, infrared scans that measure minute temperature variations were used in the tomb. They picked up two “hot spots”, suggesting there may indeed be a space behind the walls.

Next came a specially-modified ground-penetrating radar, which also suggested hidden “voids” in the tomb. “Obviously it’s an entrance to something,” the radar specialist revealed, “It’s very deep.” The Japanese radar expert even went so far as to say he could detect organic and metal objects behind the walls! The Minister of Antiquities, Mamdouh el-Damaty, declared that he was 90% sure that something was there worth investigating.

Newspapers, breathless in anticipation, splashed headlines around the world and Egypt’s Tourism Minister (a man seemingly in the know), declared that the announcement of what lays inside the secret chamber would be made in April. “It will be a ‘Big Bang’—the discovery of the 21st century,” he said. “We do not know if the burial chamber is Nefertiti or another woman, but it is full of treasures.”

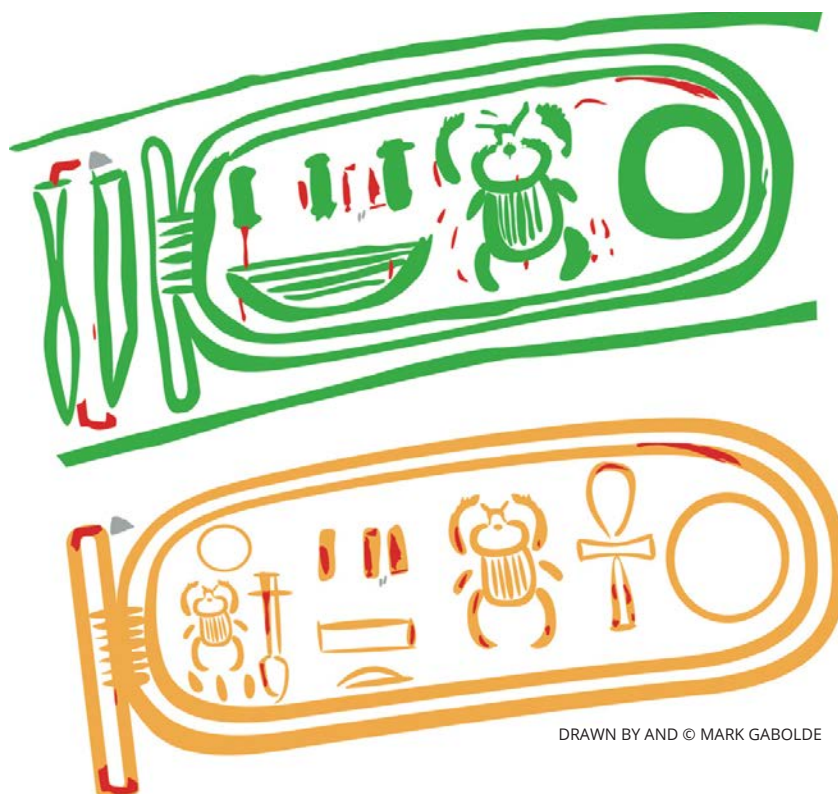
More headlines. But not everyone was convinced. The Valley of the Kings is riddled with fissures and natural voids that could explain the radar data.

A change in Antiquities Ministers saw a new, more cautious message, and a new round of scans; this time with specialists organised by the National Geographic Society. In May 2016 came the announcement: there was no evidence of hidden chambers.

But just to be sure—and to avoid any conspiracy theories about cover-ups—Dr. Zahi Hawass, another former Minister of Antiquities, has arranged for one final radar scan using Russian experts. The results from these should either confirm Nicholas Reeves’s theory



PHOTOGRAPH BY AHMED AMIN, EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO



DRAWN BY AND © MARK GABOLDE

(TOP)

Detail of the inscription on the gold mask showing the cartouche containing Tutankhamun's prenomen (Throne Name), Nebkheperure.

(BOTTOM)

The upper drawing illustrates the present, Tutankhamun-era inscription (green), with visible portions of the earlier, underlying text (red). The lower drawing shows the original name (yellow) as reconstructed on the basis of these still-visible traces (red). That original name is Ankhkheperure with an epithet of "beloved of Neferkheperure" (i.e. of Akhenaten). This cartouche was made for a woman.

that Tutankhamun's tomb is actually the front, walled-off section of a much larger tomb, or put the whole thing to rest.

It's been a busy two years for Tutankhamun. He had first made the news, earlier in 2015, because of his world-famous, golden mask—or rather, the braided divine beard attached to it. A few months earlier, in August 2014, the mask fell victim to some sloppy handling when it was lifted from its glass display case to allow staff to change a light bulb. The mask's beard, precariously held in place by a small pin, came loose.

The staff panicked.

Desperate to ensure the mask was on display to receive the next morning's visitors—and fearing whatever punishment that breaking the country's greatest icon might attract—the workers made a terrible decision. Someone found some epoxy fast-acting glue and stuck the beard back on. It was a botched job. The glue smeared messily. When the staff tried scraping it off, they left behind scratch marks on the 3,000-year-old golden face.

To make matters worse, the beard wasn't reattached in its original position. According to German restoration expert, Christian Eckmann, who was flown in to fix the mask, the workers glued the beard “slightly bent to the left side.”

The late-night handiwork didn't fool anyone. Soon, pictures of the DIY disaster were on social media and there was an international public outcry. Academics and museum curators, however, were strangely silent; they had their own restoration horror stories and were in no hurry to throw stones.

Eckmann spent two months assessing the damage using the latest high-tech gadgetry, and then carefully scraped away the epoxy—often with a small wooden stick.

While the reason behind mask being in the restoration lab in the first place wasn't great, it did present an unprecedented opportunity to examine the mask more closely than ever before.

As the debate raged over Nicholas Reeves' tomb-within-a-tomb theory, the restoration of the beard gave him the opportunity to prove another idea: that Tutankhamun's mask was originally created for a female predecessor. Reeves wasn't to be disappointed.

Dr. Reeves reported that “a fresh examination of the re-positioned and newly re-lit mask... yielded for the first time, beneath the hieroglyphs of Tutankhamun's prenomen[Throne Name, 'Nebkheperure'], lightly chased traces of an earlier, erased royal name.”

This earlier name was “Ankhkheperure”, the name adopted by Nefertiti towards the end of her revolutionary husband's reign.

Reeves believes that Nefertiti outlived her husband and became pharaoh under the name Ankhkheperure Smenkhkare. When Nefertiti died she was given a full royal burial in KV62 in the Valley of the Kings, later shared with her young step-son.

However, Christian Eckmann, the German expert brought in to repair the mask's damaged beard, refutes the finding. After spending months with the mask, he says that he didn't see any evidence of reuse.

The hi-res photo produced on the previous page, however, does seem to show something. Hopefully a further—careful—examination will shed more light on this theory.

For now, Tutankhamun's golden mask is back on show in the Egyptian Museum, delighting visitors who will no doubt be taking an unprecedented interest in his chin.

If the new scans of the tomb turn up nothing, well that's worth knowing too, because it means that Nefertiti may still be out there somewhere—and perhaps in full pharaonic glory.



*The fully restored and cleaned mask of Tutankhamun
(or Nefertiti?)*

© CHRISTIAN ECKMANN



MURDER

ON

THE

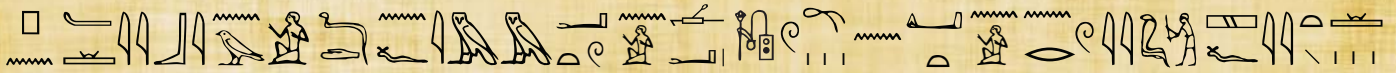
NILE

Leslie D. Black

The evocative phrase, "Death on the Nile" has become synonymous with the celebrated Agatha Christie story set in the early 20th century. However, there is another, altogether more sinister tale of Egypt to be told; one of treachery and murder, and spiced with a little black magic for good measure.

Pictured is the Lee Papyrus; one of the documents recounting the sinister magic used in the Harem Conspiracy against Ramesses III, and the trial of those accused of "the abomination of every god and goddess..."

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY



*"Penhuibin... said to him: 'Give to me a roll
for enduing me with strength and might...'"*

Text from the Lee Papyrus, detailing the
treachery of the Harem Conspiracy.

Our story takes place over 3,000 years ago and, like Agatha Christie's, is also set upon the banks of the great Nile. The year is 1155 B.C. One of Egypt's last formidable pharaohs is about to be caught in a series of sinister events leading inexorably to his violent demise.

DURING THE LATTER HALF OF EGYPT'S great 19th dynasty, a series of ineffectual kings embarked upon a course of political fragmentation and internal feuding, severely diminishing Egypt's might and influence.

In the spring of 1184 B.C. the founder of the 20th Dynasty, Pharaoh Setnakhte died, passing the mantle of kingship to his 31-year-old son Ramesses—the third ruler to bear the name.

Unfortunately for the new pharaoh, Egypt's wilting influence on the international stage coincided with cataclysmic events taking place across swathes of the Near East. Widespread droughts and crop failures together with a new threat from a group known as the "Sea Peoples". This was an alliance of armed settlers from around the Mediterranean who had banded together with the firm goal of finding a new home. For the Sea Peoples, Egypt's relatively green lands must have seemed a very attractive target—and they were prepared to take it by force.

Ramesses' reforms included the strengthening of Egypt's military (subduing incursions by the Libyans in the process), and in the eighth year of his reign, neutralising the threat of the Sea Peoples.

Ramesses fought off the Sea Peoples on several occasions, as his predecessor, Merenptah, had done some 30 years earlier. Eventually, the Sea Peoples' forces were soundly defeated on land and sea and never recovered to pose another threat to Egypt. In Ramesses' words, "As for those who reached my boundary, their seed is not. Their hearts and their souls are finished unto all eternity."

Although victorious, these conflicts would eventually produce a devastating effect on the economic welfare of the country. As the drought gripped the country, widespread hunger led to unrest amongst the population.

This being said, at the age of around 62, with Egypt's borders secured, Ramesses could perhaps have expected to spend his remaining years in relative peace and security.

The royal residence had for many years been the great city of Pi-Ramesses in the Nile Delta, however, Ramesses, had recently moved the court some 350 miles south to Thebes and his palace within the precinct of his royal worship temple at Medinet Habu.

Here the pharaoh's extensive coterie included the upper echelons of administrators, army commanders, domestics, his family and royal harem.

As a sign of great status, and to ensure a smooth succession to a treasured son, it was common for the pharaoh to have many wives within the royal harem. The role of "King's mother" was a prestigious one, so championing one's own offspring must have been a constant temptation for the ambitious.

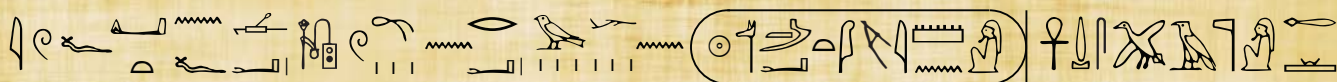
As the eldest surviving male child, the son of Queen Tyti, Prince Ramesses (IV), had been established as heir apparent. However, as we shall see, one of the king's secondary wives, Tiye, harboured ambitions to place her own son, Pentawere upon the throne of Egypt.

Tiye and several members of the royal court plotted to assassinate the ageing monarch and instigate an armed uprising that they hoped would trigger a widespread revolt, culminating in Prince Pentawere being crowned Pharaoh in place of his half-brother.

Secluded as they were from the outside world, the ladies of the harem needed to solicit assistance from members of the royal household with external access. This perilous course of action was essential not only in synchronising the assassination with the planned uprising but also perhaps in obtaining the necessary expertise to dispatch Ramesses himself.

What we know today of the conspiracy comes from two surviving documents, the Judicial Papyrus of Turin, and the Lee and Rollin Papyri (both parts of one document).

These 3,000-year-old papyrus records contain transcripts of the trials of those implicated in the conspiracy. Pebekkamen, "chief of the chamber", is named as Tiye's main accomplice. He in turn enlisted several associates including the military commander General Pasai. The records show that it was Pasai who



"He gave to him a magic roll of Usermaatre-Meriamun (Ramesses III),
Life! Prosperity! Health! The Great God."

© JEFFREY ROSS BURZACOTT



No expense was spared in the construction of Ramesses III's great royal worship temple at Medinet Habu. It was designed to perpetuate his memory as a strong and pious ruler, and help sustain his soul for eternity. In this scene the king offers sweet-smelling incense to the Theban divine family—Amun, Mut and Khonsu—while receiving Thoth's blessing.

However, elsewhere, things were not faring well. The elite craftsmen from Deir el-Medina who worked on the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings relied on government rations to survive—and they hadn't been paid—for two months. And so it was during Ramesses III's reign that the world's first recorded labour strike was held, ca. 1155 B.C.

It may not have been hard for the coup conspirators to convince recruits to the cause that the king wasn't up to the job.

was to lead the armed revolt against Ramesses IV after his father's assassination.

Pentawere, Pasai's superior, also commanded an elite group of foot soldiers. With these military assets the dissidents no doubt felt confident that they would meet with little resistance to their treachery, and once Pentawere was proposed as Pharaoh the remaining military would surely capitulate.

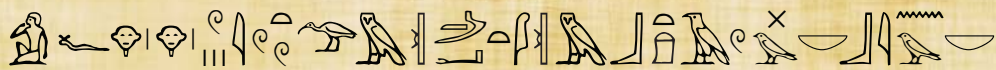
Like all Egyptian kings, Ramesses III was considered semi-divine, residing under the protection and endorsement of the gods. It was this theology that allowed the Pharaoh to rule with utmost authority.

Without the help of supernatural forces, attempting an act of heresy such as an assault upon the king's person was doomed to fail. The court records in the Lee Papyrus tell us that the conspirators stole a "secret book of magic from the royal library" to use against

the king. Black magic incantations from Ramesses' own library were used with malevolent intent to bring the treachery to its fruition. The court magician, Prekamenef, is directly accused of contriving to remove any protective magic surrounding the king, making him vulnerable to attack. Now, with everything in place the traitors waited for the appointed hour to arrive.

One evening in early April 1153 B.C. as the king relaxed in the opulent surroundings of Medinet Habu, the ladies of the royal harem and their fellow conspirators, believing the diabolical incantations and burning wax dolls had incapacitated the palace guards and weakened the king, made their move.

What happened next is still unclear, but evidently the plot was discovered before the coup could be fully executed. The widespread revolt never gained momentum, and the traitors were apprehended almost



“Now, when he was examined concerning them,
truth was found in every crime and in every evil (deed). . . .”

© JAAP JAN HEMMES



THE SCENE OF THE CRIME?

The so-called Harem Suites are situated on the top floor of the fortified gatehouse to Medinet Habu. Was it here, while Ramesses was “entertaining” the maidens of his harem that the conspirators pounced?

The wall scenes leave us in no doubt that these rooms were dedicated to pleasurable pursuits. Here we see the king enjoying a game of nude senet with one of his concubines. Neither Ramesses III or the young lady are wearing much more than a smile.

INSET: The Harem Suite reliefs have suffered since they were (thankfully) recorded by the Prussian expedition led by Lepsius, who recorded them in the early 1840s.

immediately. The conspirators had grossly miscalculated. Prince Ramesses quickly regained control and the attempted coup ended in failure. However within the apartments of his “Temple of millions of years,” the ageing pharaoh lay mortally wounded.

That Ramesses was assassinated, is only ever alluded to cryptically. Egyptian records concerning attacks upon the king’s person are notoriously obscure. Conceding that a pharaoh—the “Son of Ra”—could be harmed by mortal weapons would bring into question the entire principle of divine kingship.

Nevertheless, the papyrus trial records refer to Ramesses III as the “great god”—an epithet only given to deceased kings. As an ostrakon from Deir el-Medina recorded: “The hawk has flown to heaven”.

The atmosphere at court must have been extremely tense in the days following the revolt. Surviving sections of the Judicial Papyrus detail the four trials that were held to deal with conspirators. Twenty-eight people were sentenced to execution and ten were permitted the “honour” of taking their lives.

We are never told exactly how many harem women were accused, or indeed what fate befell Queen Tiye. Possibly to avoid causing embarrassment to the royal family, Prince Pentawere was one of those offered the option of death by suicide.

In another twist to the tale, while attempting to gain leniency, inmates of the harem were discovered fraternising with members of the judiciary. Punishment for the judges involved was metered out in a gruesome



“He had done them all, together with all the other great criminals.”

form: their noses and ears were cut off.

The mummy of Ramesses III was discovered—along with those of many other New Kingdom pharaohs—in the Deir el-Bahri cache in 1881. The royal dead had been rounded up by Theban priests and rescued from further desecration after their tombs had been opened by state officials hungry for bullion.

The years since this momentous discovery have seen numerous theories surrounding the actual cause of Ramesses’ death: from food poisoning (the servant in charge of his food and drink was among those listed for high treason), to a strike from a deadly snake (some of the traitors were referred to as “lord of the snakes”).

However, recent forensic studies of the ruler’s remains have finally solved the mystery. CT scans revealed a deep wound to the throat that was probably fatal. Indeed, the mummy bears multiple lacerations, suggesting attacks from more than one assailant. Could this have been the work of General Pasai and his soldiers? Or perhaps even Prince Pentawere himself?

In giving up its secrets, the Deir el-Bahri cache had one more part to play in our tale. An unmarked coffin was found to contain an unidentified male, his face eternally frozen in what appears to be a scream of agony. His hands and feet were bound, and he was wedged into a makeshift coffin accompanied by a ritually unclean goatskin.

One on hand, his post-mortem preparation for eternity was decidedly lacking; this mummy, dubbed “Unknown Man E”, had gone without the customary embalming: his internal organs were still in place. On the other hand, this man had been chosen by the priests to share the company of some of Egypt’s mightiest pharaohs. Whoever he was, he was clearly someone with royal connections. Following genetic analysis of this man and the mummy of Ramesses III, several prominent Egyptologists have hypothesised that “Unknown Man E” could, in fact, be none other than disgraced Prince Pentawere.

As for Prince Ramesses (IV), he succeeded his father as originally planned and the progeny of king Ramesses III continued to rule Egypt for another 100 years. The New Kingdom, however, was never again to witness the splendour of its golden age.

The great warrior king had spent much of his long reign repelling invaders from Egypt’s borders, while never suspecting his deadliest enemies were all along, those closest to him.

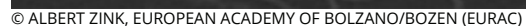
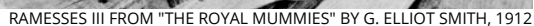
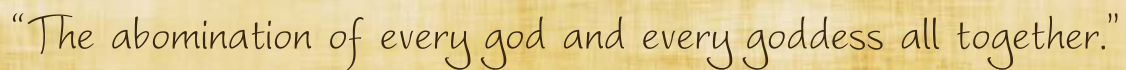
© LESLIE D. BLACK



THE MIGDOL GATE

The original entrance to Ramesses III's great temple at Medinet Habu is through a fortified gatehouse, known as a "migdol". It is thought to be modelled on citadels the king had seen on military campaigns in Syria.

This gate, combined with the formidable mud-brick enclosure wall, gave the temple a fortress-like nature, which was particularly useful under the reigns of the last Ramesside pharaohs. Bands of marauding Libyans often threatened the populace of West Thebes, with the kings seemingly unable to do anything about it. Townfolk were often forced to seek refuge behind the thick walls of Medinet Habu.



Events such as erratic Nile flows, poor harvests, royal tomb builders striking, and the near loss of control of the Delta to the Sea Peoples may have been evidence to rebellious factions that Ramesses III had lost *ma'at*, and therefore his divine legitimacy to rule.

The scans of Ramesses III revealed that the bandages around Ramesses' throat had been hiding a knife wound that was deep enough to reach the vertebrae. All the vital organs in this area—the trachea, oesophagus, and large blood vessels—were severed. Of course, for Ramesses, death was just a temporary state of affairs: detected inside the wound was a small Wedjat Eye amulet, placed there by priests to heal the wound for the king's afterlife.



"The great punishments of death were executed upon him...."



"MYSTERY MAN E" FROM "THE ROYAL MUMMIES" BY G. ELLIOT SMITH, 1912 (THE EGYPTOLOGY LIBRARY OF PEGGY JOY)

"MYSTERY MAN E" GIVEN A NAME?

In June 1886, Gaston Maspero, head of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, was unwrapping a curious mummy found in the royal cache at Deir el-Bahri. Maspero assigned letters to the six anonymous mummies in the cache, and this one became "Mystery Man E".

Looking at the above photo, it's easy to see why Maspero thought that "Man E" had suffered a particularly unpleasant death—probably poisoned:

"The expression of excruciating pain spread over the face hardly allow[s] for any other explanation."

The mummy was unembalmed, had his hands and feet bound, and wore an alarming expression on his face, implying he died in horrible agony.

Maspero's suggestion was that this was the disgraced son of Ramesses III, Prince Pentawere, whose mother's coup had failed so spectacularly. The court documents recording the aftermath of the coup tell us that rather than facing an execution, Pentawere was allowed to take his life.

The question remains, however, why would one of the traitors whose actions the Judicial Papyrus described as "great abominations of the land" be allowed the honour of being buried with the royal family?

Although the body wasn't mummified in the traditional manner of removing the major organs, a seemingly hurried attempt had been made to preserve the body. When found it was covered in a layer of natron (a natural salt) to dry it out, and wrapped in layers of bandages. The man's eyes had also been packed with linen to maintain his appearance after death. It was clear that despite his tortured appearance, Mystery Man E was cared for after death.

CT scans of the mummy revealed compressed skinfolds around the neck, which suggested a violent death; possibly strangulation or hanging.

Analysis of DNA results revealed that the man was indeed royalty; Man E and Ramesses III were directly related to each other in the paternal line, strongly suggesting they were father and son. So is the body of Unknown Man E that of Pentawere? It can't be proven, but we can say "probably".

It may be that the body of Pentawere, while denied an official elaborate mummification, was collected soon after death. His limbs were tied to hold them in place, and he was hurriedly wrapped and placed in a makeshift coffin by someone who still cared about his afterlife. A prince it seems, albeit a rogue one, is still a prince.

Abridged extracts from Bob Brier's new book, "Cleopatra's Needles".

I F YOU HAD TO PICK the most remarkable object ever produced in ancient Egypt, what would you choose? Tutankhamun's gold mask? Karnak Temple? The bust of Queen Nefertiti? The Great Pyramid? For most people, including Egyptologists, it would be difficult to single one out of all the wonderful objects. For me it's no problem. It isn't even close. It's an obelisk. Lying in a quarry near Aswan is an unfinished obelisk that I believe is the most amazing creation of the ancient Egyptians. It was going to be the largest obelisk ever, by far. It weighs more than 1,000 tons. That's right, more than 2,000,000 pounds, more than two jumbo jets, and they were going to stand it up and balance it on a pedestal. I have been to the quarry more than 100 times and every time I am amazed. How were they going to move it? Stand it up? It is this obelisk that cemented my love affair with obelisks. The stonemasons who were going to move and erect this obelisk were heroes.

The tales of engineering marvels and obelisks don't end in ancient Egypt. They continue in Roman times and into the Renaissance. In the nineteenth century three very large ancient obelisks left Egypt, destined for Paris, London and New York. The men who transported them faced tremendous difficulties merely trying to move what the ancient Egyptians had created. Loves were lost, one obelisk was lost at sea, and one nearly fell and broke. Some of the men who moved the obelisks left accounts of their trials and tribulations. One was so depressed by the loss of the lives of his men that he never wrote about moving the obelisk and we must trace his actions through newspaper accounts and other sources. The stories of these obelisks in exile are no less remarkable than ones that took place in ancient Egyptian quarries.

Bob Brier

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLES

The Lost Obelisks of Egypt



FROM THE EGYPTOLOGY LIBRARY OF PEGGY JOY

THE UNFINISHED OBELISK, ca. 1904

The obelisk is so large that it makes a cameo appearance in Cecil B. DeMille's 1923 silent film "The Ten Commandments". In one scene we see Israelites toiling under the whip of a cruel taskmaster, pulling a large block of stone up an inclined ramp. That incline is the unfinished obelisk! (Bob Brier, Cleopatra's Needles.)

PART ONE:

Cleopatra's Needle Sails for London



PHOTO: VICTOR R. RUIZ

Why Cleopatra's Needle?

With the death of Cleopatra VII, the last Ptolemaic ruler, the Romans took control of Egypt. Octavian, now the sole ruler of Rome and consequently of Egypt, changed his name to Augustus and decided to enhance the Caesarium, built by Cleopatra to honour Caesar. (Octavian had been adopted by Caesar, so he was actually honouring his father.) To make the temple worthy of the great man, in 12/13 B.C. Augustus had two of Thutmose III's obelisks (ca. 1450 B.C.) moved from Heliopolis, near modern Cairo, to Alexandria and re-erected in front of the mausoleum. As centuries passed, the building disappeared, the original significance of the obelisks was lost, and they became known as "Cleopatra's Needles."



ALEXANDRIA'S OBELISKS

In 1737 Frederic Norden, a Danish naval architect, was commissioned by King Christian VI to make a journey of exploration in Egypt. He sketched the two obelisks on the Alexandrian shoreline and wrote, "The obelisk that is thrown down appears to have been broken..."

When the Dixon brothers uncovered the fallen obelisk, 135 years later, they discovered that not only was it whole, but its hieroglyphs weren't quite so obliterated as they had heard. The obelisk was definitely worth bringing home.

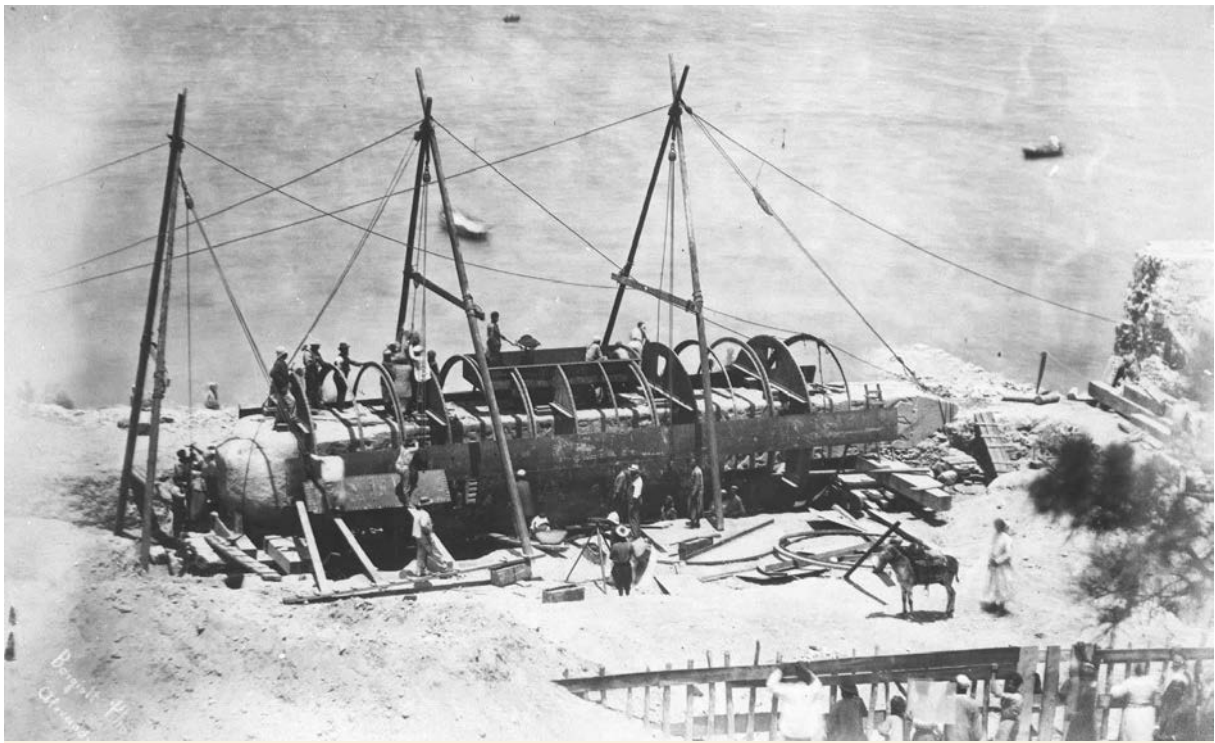
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Englishman and the obelisk

In the summer of 1872 a 28-year-old engineer named Waynman Dixon was dispatched to Cairo by his older brother, John, to build a bridge across the Nile at Giza. In October of 1872 John visited Waynman and the brothers went to see the two Alexandrian obelisks. They knew that one had been offered to England years before but nothing had been done to move it. Immediately they began discussing how to transport the fallen obelisk to England. They asked the locals about

the depth of the sea in front of the obelisk and on the spot Waynman came up with a plan that would ultimately bring England's obelisk home: Encase the fallen obelisk in an iron cylinder, roll it into the sea, and tow it to England.

In the past, support for such a project had been repeatedly held back by a rumour that the obelisk was in poor condition with most of the hieroglyphic inscription worn away.

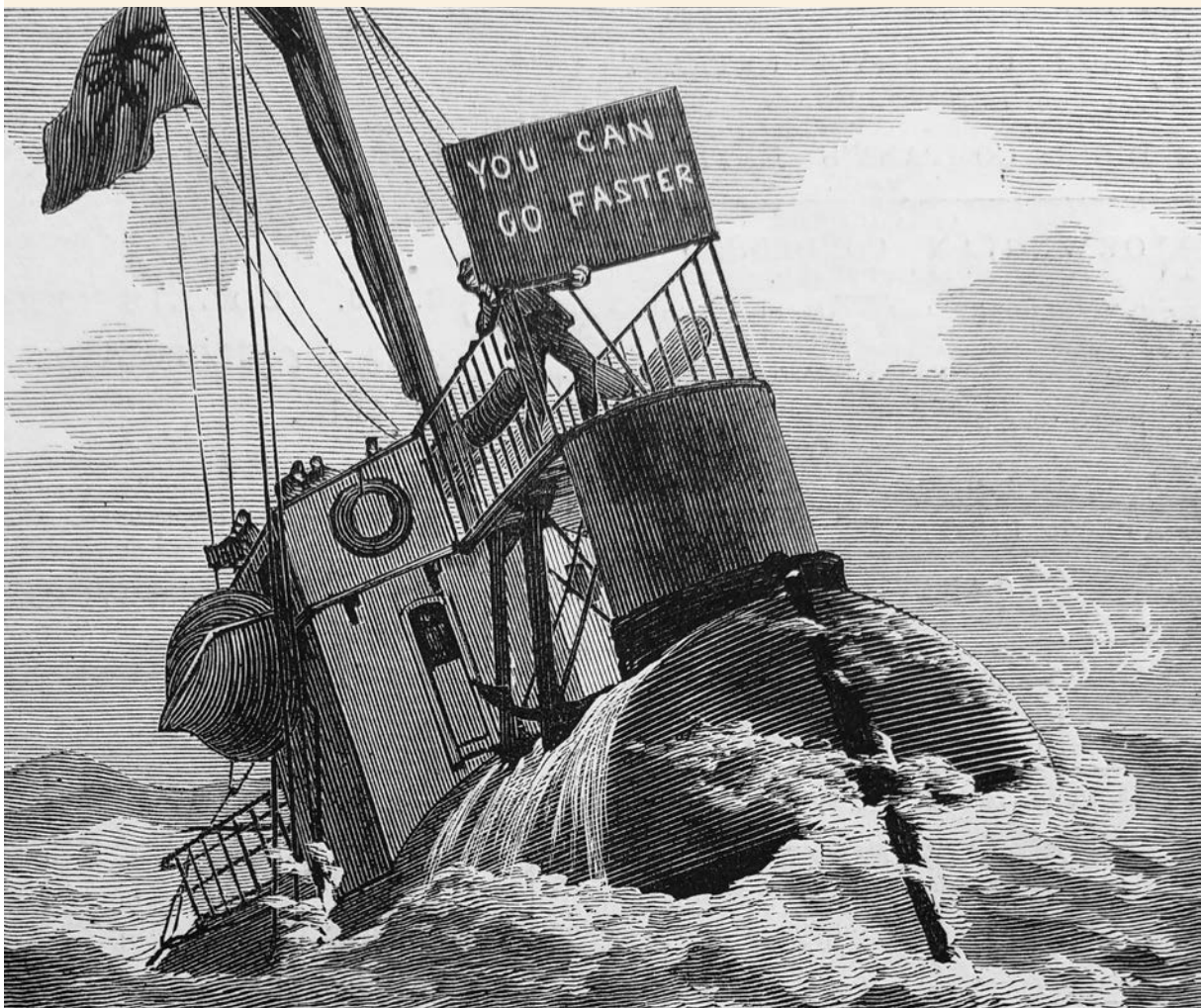


(ABOVE)

How to ship an obelisk. The Cleopatra being built around Thutmose III's obelisk. For stability at sea, the obelisk was stowed four inches below the centre of the cylinder. Once the iron plates forming the skin were riveted in place, a steering cabin was built on top.

(BELOW)

The Cleopatra being towed. During calm seas the two captains could communicate using megaphones, but for rough weather Captain Carter would stand on the steering bridge and use a blackboard. At night, a system of lights were used.



COURTESY BOB BRIER

A Freemason to the rescue

Waynman quickly hired workmen who uncovered three sides of the obelisk. It was in quite good condition and Waynman photographed it so John could show potential donors that the obelisk was worthy of England. Armed with the new photographs, John began knocking on doors, but his idea of a national subscription to pay for transporting it never took hold. Fortunately, Sir Erasmus Wilson, a famous surgeon, became interested in the project.

In November of 1876 Wilson, curious to hear the plan for transporting the obelisk, visited John Dixon in his London office. Wilson had never met the elder Dixon, but knew his reputation as a reliable and resourceful engineer who had recently built the first railway in China. Wilson entered Dixon's office with optimism for the project, but what seems to have

clinched the deal was that they were both Freemasons. As Wilson put it, "I soon found that Mr. Dixon was a Freemason, hence all formality and ceremony were at once banished."

Wilson presented John with an offer that was both generous and dangerous: "Will you undertake to set it up safely on the banks of the Thames for 10,000 pounds; no cure no pay?" The "no cure no pay" meant that John would have to fund the project himself and if he failed, the loss would be his. He would only receive the 10,000 pounds when the obelisk was standing upright on a site to be decided. It was a tremendous risk. Without a second of hesitation he accepted his fellow Freemason's offer. The Dixon brothers would be bringing Britannia her obelisk.

Building Cleopatra

John's first step was to take his brother's plans for the cylinder to the Thames Iron Works. He entrusted the job of constructing the cylinder to a brilliant young engineer named Benjamin Baker. Baker had noted that it had taken the French seven years to finally erect their obelisk [some 40 years earlier in 1836]. In contrast to the leisurely French timetable, five months after signing the contract all the parts of the sixty-ton cylinder had been shipped to Alexandria for assembly. The cylinder, with its own crew on board, was going to be towed to England by a steamer. Captain Henry Carter, an experienced and highly respected seaman from the P&O Company, would accompany them. He

and a small crew that would live inside the *Cleopatra*.

It was now time to assemble the cylinder around the obelisk. The obelisk would pass through six internal bulkheads that formed individual watertight compartments so that if one sprung a leak, the others would not fill with water. Iron plates forming the cylinder's skin were then riveted in place.

Divers sent down to clear the seabed to receive the cylinder found the remains of a huge wall with blocks weighing up to twenty tons. Using dynamite, they blew up the wall in order to remove its shattered stones. For all we know, they dynamited the remains of Cleopatra's palace!

Out to sea

On September 7 the tugs began towing the *Cleopatra* out to sea. Slowly but surely the cylinder approached the critical nine-foot depth where it would float. Just before noon the *Cleopatra's* movements changed dramatically; it was rising and falling with the swells in the harbour—she was afloat.

Captain Carter hired seven men for his crew: his second in command, the boatswain; five Maltese seamen; and a carpenter to make any necessary repairs at sea. Carter had to pay a bit above the going wages for such a crew; many seamen were hesitant about signing onto such an unusual vessel for four weeks on the open seas. It would, indeed, be a voyage they would never forget.

A British steamer, the *Olga*, was about to sail from Alexandria with a load of grain destined for England. Carter thought the *Olga* suitable for towing the *Cleopatra* and struck a deal with Captain Booth who agreed to tow the *Cleopatra* to Falmouth. Everything was in place for the great adventure.

The *Cleopatra's* odyssey began on September 21 when Captain Booth commanding the *Olga*, slowly towed the cylinder and obelisk out of Alexandria Harbour and into the Mediterranean. On the deck of the *Olga* was Waynman Dixon, who intended to accompany his cylinder all the way to England.

The first week was uneventful, with clear skies and calm seas. On October 15, their luck ran out.

Hurricane, then disaster

At 9:00 a.m. rains began out of the south-southwest and within a few hours reached gale force. The wind and waves were so strong that Captain Carter feared they would rip the deckhouse right off the cylinder. For an entire day, gale and hurricane forces had tossed them about, and now it was getting dark. It seemed almost impossible, but the weather was worsening.

Carter decided their best hope was to abandon ship. He lowered their little lifeboat but, before they could get into it, a huge wave sent it crashing into the hull, smashing it to bits. Captain Booth slowed engines and tried to manoeuvre the *Olga* closer to the *Cleopatra*. He said to his men, "What can we do, no boat will live in such a sea." William Askin, the second mate, replied, we must lower a boat and try, we can't leave the poor fellows to drown." Five other brave crewmen volunteered and with great difficulty descended in one of their lifeboats to rescue the *Cleopatra's* crew.

Captain Booth could see the lifeboat slowly fighting its way through the turbulence towards the *Cleopatra*. The *Cleopatra's* crew was on deck, clinging to the rail- ings. Over an hour later, Askin and his crew

reached the *Cleopatra*. A line thrown to them was caught, but was pulled out of the sailor's hands as the boat was battered by the waves. Then, before the line could be thrown again, a giant wave reared up and crashed down on the little boat, and it disappeared.

The six brave men were never seen again, and Carter and his terrified crew would have to survive the night on their own.

At 5:00 a.m. Booth managed to manoeuvre the *Olga* close enough to the *Cleopatra* to throw her a line. It went across the *Cleopatra's* stern and was grabbed. The *Cleopatra's* crew prepared to abandon ship. Using the line they had thrown, the *Olga* sent an unmanned lifeboat to the foundering *Cleopatra*. In high seas, one by one the *Cleopatra's* crewmembers jumped into the boat, Captain Carter last. The boat was quickly hauled onto the *Olga*. Finally all hands were on board.

Booth concluded that the *Cleopatra's* 300-ton cylinder must have now filled with water and was at the bottom of the Bay of Biscay. What began as a wonderful patriotic adventure had ended in disaster.

Lost at sea

As they stood on board, none of the sad company had any inkling that the *Cleopatra* was still afloat. At 4:00 p.m. the lookout on the *Fitzmaurice*, a British ship bound for Spain with a cargo of pig iron, spotted what looked like a capsized ship. Through his binoculars Captain Evans made out the letters on the hull: CLEOPATRA. He had read of the *Cleopatra's* voyage in the newspapers and knew exactly what she was. Getting as close as possible, he hailed her but was not hailed back. There was no sign of her crew. She had been abandoned.

According to maritime law, if Evans could secure a line to the *Cleopatra* and tow her to a port, he would

be entitled to payment for his work and also the value of the ship and its cargo. Given her unique cargo, it could be worth a considerable sum. They managed to get a lifeboat into the still churning seas and secure a line to the *Cleopatra*. The prize was theirs; now they just had to tow her to safety. With her steering deck half submerged, it was a difficult tow, but Captain Evans managed to make their way to the nearest port, Ferrol, on the Spanish coast.

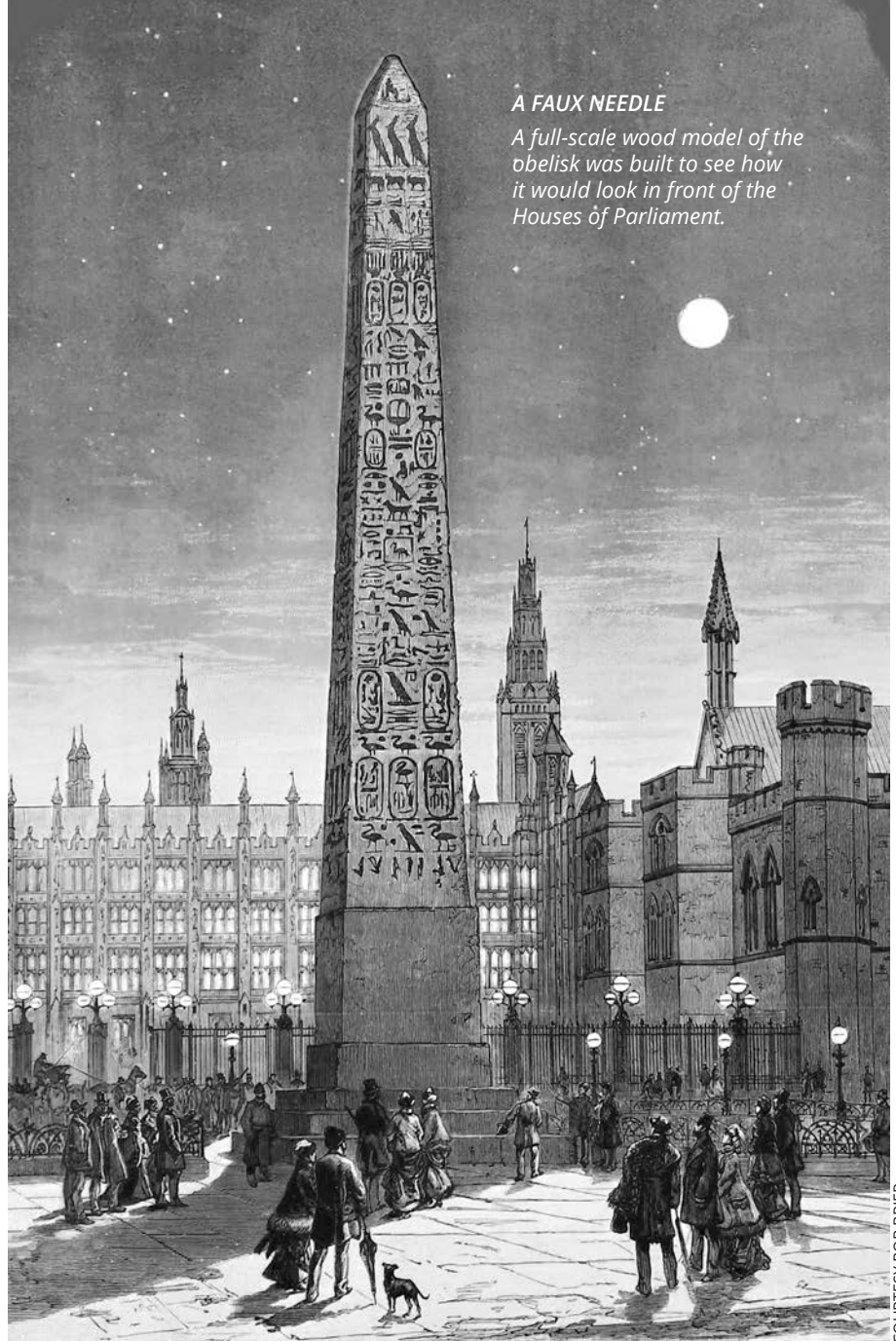
Captain Evans contacted the British vice-consul and left the *Cleopatra* in his custody. The vice-consul contacted London. They would be getting their obelisk, but at a terrible price.

What's an obelisk worth?

Back in England, John Dixon's offer of 600 pounds was rejected by the owners of the *Fitzmaurice*, and the claim went before Sir R. J. Phillimore of the High Court to settle the matter. What was *Cleopatra's* Needle worth? The *Fitzmaurice's* owners suggested it was nearly priceless. They pointed out that France had spent the equivalent of 80,000 pounds sterling to bring their obelisk to Paris. On the other extreme, John Dixon proposed that the obelisk should be viewed as a load of stone, valued by the ton! Justice Phillimore didn't buy Dixon's view. He praised Dixon's patriotic intention

to bring England an obelisk, but explained that it would play no part in the valuation of the claim. After an adjournment for lunch, he finally assigned a total salvage value of 2,500 pounds for the *Cleopatra* and her cargo.

With legalities settled, Captain Carter set out to repair the *Cleopatra* in Ferrol. When everything was in order, John Dixon hired the *Anglia*, one of the largest and most powerful deep-sea tugs in the Port of London to tow the *Cleopatra*. It had two captains, one to steer the *Anglia* and one to supervise the ship being towed.



A FAUX NEEDLE

A full-scale wood model of the obelisk was built to see how it would look in front of the Houses of Parliament.

COURTESY BOB BRIER

Dixon wasn't taking any chances on losing the *Cleopatra* again. At 7:00 a.m. on January 15, the Anglia gently moved out through Ferrol harbour with the *Cleopatra* in tow. The weather was unusually fair for the Bay of

Biscay in January. On the morning of the 18th they rounded the tip of France and entered the English Channel. They were halfway home.

Home at last

On January 21 at ten o'clock in the morning, they reached Gravesend and the *Cleopatra* docked off English soil. The two vessels cleared customs quickly and by 1:00 p.m. they were slowly sailing up the Thames. The long journey was over at last.

Although Cleopatra's Needle was finally in London, it still hadn't been decided exactly where in the city it would be erected. Some favoured the middle of a public square, much like France's obelisk at the Place de la Concorde. Others felt that, because the ancient Egypt-

tians put obelisks at the entrances to temples, the obelisk should be near buildings. The two men who had paid for the obelisk's journey, John Dixon and Sir Erasmus Wilson, had the privilege of making the ultimate decision. The contract they signed had stipulated that it would be on the Thames Embankment, but now both felt a better site would be in front of the Houses of Parliament. John Dixon went so far as to erect a full-scale wood model of the obelisk to show how it would look. The site was vetoed by some

unexpected players—the Directors of the Metropolitan District Railway. Unfortunately, the proposed site was above a train route and the Directors were afraid the train’s vibrations would topple the obelisk, causing it to crash through the top of the tunnel.

Eventually it was decided that the original site agreed upon by Dixon and Wilson was best and John quickly dismantled his wood obelisk and re-erected it at the Adelphi Steps of the Thames Embankment to show Londoners how their obelisk would look when finally set upright.

On May 30 Captain Carter supervised the towing of the *Cleopatra* to the Adelphi Steps, where an ingenious dry dock awaited her. A wood cradle was anchored to the riverbed so that when the tide rose it would barely be submerged. The *Cleopatra* was floated above the cradle, and when the tide went out, she came safely to rest in her dry dock. A swarm of ironworkers dismantled her, exposing the obelisk to the light of day for the first time since it left Egypt.

Benjamin Baker, who had created the *Cleopatra* at the Thames Iron Works, was called upon to fashion an iron mechanism that would support the obelisk in a horizontal position 50 feet above the ground and then swing it into position on top of its pedestal. Throughout the summer, teams of carpenters nailed and bolted together a giant wood scaffold to support the obelisk and its turning mechanism as it was raised aloft, 300-tons of granite and iron, 50 feet into the air.

John Dixon had announced to the public that he would lower his obelisk onto its pedestal at 3:00 p.m. on September 12. The day before the big event, he removed the iron pins that locked the obelisk into a horizontal position and discovered that he had calcu-

lated the obelisk’s center of gravity so accurately that just his own muscle power, pulling on a cable, could move the obelisk towards vertical.

People started gathering around the obelisk early in the morning to get a good viewing spot. All Londoners wanted to be a part of history.

A few minutes before three o’clock, John Dixon gave the signal to remove the pins that held the obelisk in a horizontal position. The 230-ton obelisk began slowly rotating through the air. The packed crowd stood transfixed, amazed at how gracefully the massive stone moved. After ten minutes of breathless silence the shaft of granite was at 45 degrees. When Big Ben sounded 3:30 p.m., the obelisk was upright, hovering just four inches above its pedestal with nothing fixing it to the base, just as the ancient Egyptian engineers had done. The crowd burst into applause. The obelisk was lowered the final four inches onto its pedestal. It had been an exhausting day for Dixon, Wilson, and everyone else involved in the obelisk’s erection, but it had been a rousing success.

For the next few weeks the site was cleared. The iron jacked around the obelisk’s middle was removed, the huge timbers for the scaffolding were taken down, and the iron turning mechanism was dismantled.

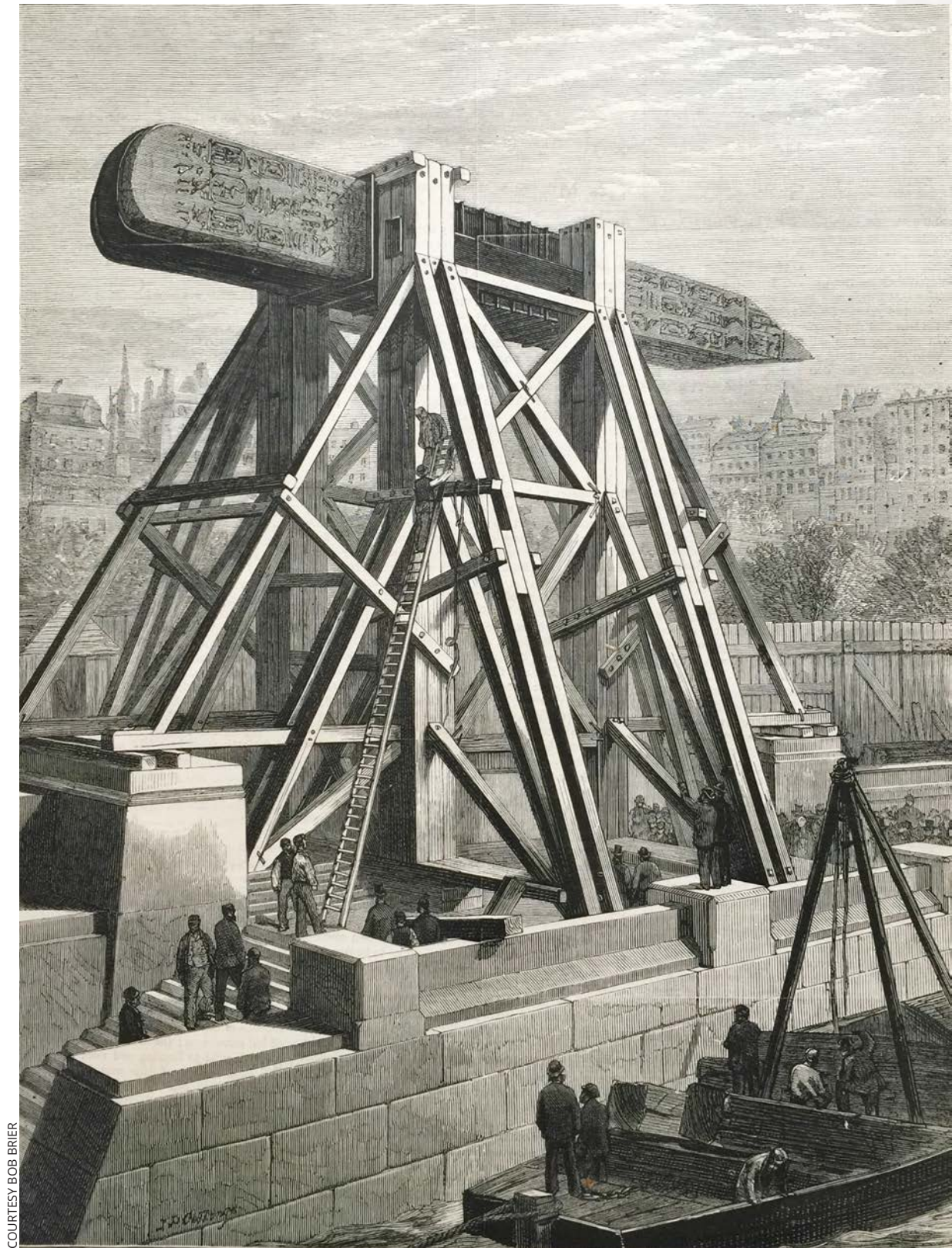
Commemorative plaques were added to the pedestal that can still be read by visitors today. One tells the obelisk’s ancient history and then recounts its more modern adventure (inset, top).

Most visitors to the obelisk see the first plaque, but there is another, on the side facing the Thames, that is usually missed. There is an ancient Egyptian expression, “To say the name of the dead is to make him live again.” Whenever I visit the obelisk, I walk around to the riverside and read the plaque (inset, bottom).

THROUGH THE PATRIOTIC ZEAL OF
ERASMUS WILSON F.R.S.
THIS OBELISK
WAS BROUGHT FROM ALEXANDRIA
ENCASED IN AN IRON CYLINDER
IT WAS ABANDONED DURING A STORM
IN THE BAY OF BISCAY
RECOVERED AND ERECTED
ON THIS SPOT BY
JOHN DIXON C.E.
IN THE 42ND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
QUEEN VICTORIA
1878

WILLIAM ASKIN MICHAEL BURNS
JAMES GARDINER MICHAEL DONALD
JOSEPH BENBOW WILLIAM PATAN
PERISHED IN A BOLD ATTEMPT
TO SUCCOUR THE CREW OF THE
OBELISK SHIP “CLEOPATRA” DURING
THE STORM OCTOBER 14TH 1877

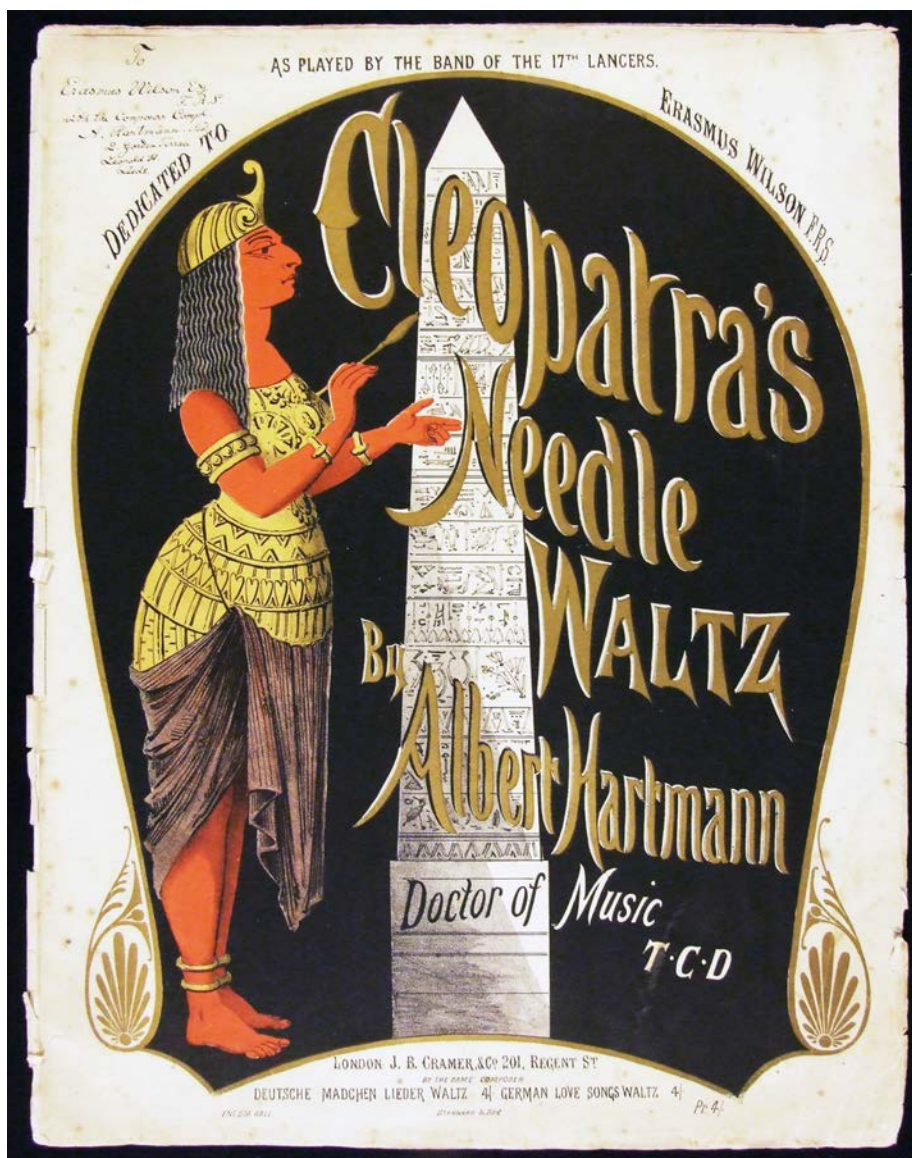
Bob Brier



COURTESY BOB BRIER

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE ALOFT

The incredible mechanism that was created in 1878 to turn the obelisk to vertical and place it on its base. From the front page of "The Graphic" (a weekly illustrated newspaper), Saturday, June 1, 1878.



COURTESY BOB BRIER

NEEDLE-MANIA

Leading up to the erection of the obelisk, London went wild with obelisk mania. Hawkers sold an assortment of souvenirs; one of the most popular was a lead pencil in the shape of an obelisk that ladies could hang on a chain around their necks. There was even a song (above) that was dedicated to Erasmus Wilson.

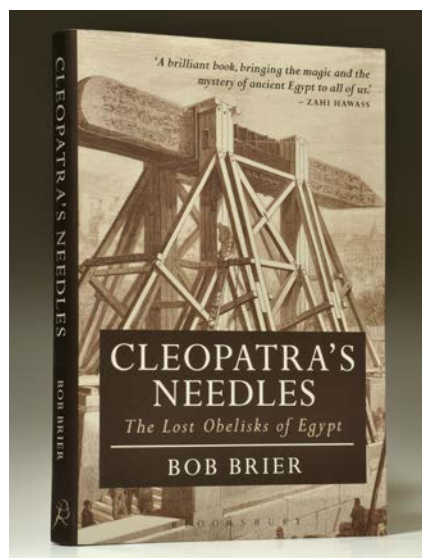
“Cleopatra’s Needles” continues in the next issue of Nile Magazine, with “The Oldest Skyscraper in New York”.

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Bob Brier
CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLES
The Lost Obelisks of Egypt

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SUNSET



SUNRISE



SYMBOLISM IN NEW KINGDOM THEBAN TOMBS

Words and Photos: Jaap Jan Hemmes



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"MAY YOU INHALE THE SOFT BREATH OF THE NORTH WIND"

When he wasn't working on the 19th Dynasty tombs of Seti I and Ramesses II, Sennedjem, a mason, poured his energies into a small but fabulously decorated tomb overlooking the royal tomb-builders' village at Deir el-Medina. The tomb became a family vault which he shared with his wife, Ineferti, their children and grandchildren. This image from the tomb shows Ineferti's brother, Roma, who is attending to their presents and offering a billowing sail inflated by wind—a symbol of cool, fresh air to breathe for eternity.

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED that there are never any clouds? Among the wealth of monuments on the Theban West Bank is a honeycomb of rock-cut tombs from where the non-royal elite planned to explore eternity.

These tombs usually consist of a walled forecourt that gives access to a tomb chapel elaborately decorated with burial rituals and the journey to the hereafter. There are also idealised scenes displaying the harmonious paradise the deceased was hoping to enjoy after death; idealised scenes of the deceased's earthly life. Here the harvest is always bountiful, the cattle well-fed and the fishermen's catch bulging. There is never a cloud in the sky. Ever. This blemish-free vista was their vision of perfection.

The purpose of these images was to show and emphasize the status of the tomb owner and to let visitors bring offerings and recite offering formulas, all necessary for an enjoyable second life of the deceased.

The actual tomb was a subterranean chamber that usually could be reached by a shaft in the forecourt or in the tomb chapel.

“

This blemish-free vista was their vision of perfection.

With few exceptions, the tomb chapel is the only part where visitors nowadays have access to, and it is here where they can admire the often still very colourful interiors.

Not overlooked but maybe given less attention are the upper parts of the walls and the ceilings of the tomb chapels.

Sun, wind and shade

The ancient Egyptians probably cherished refreshing breezes and shade more than most. Luckily the prevailing wind from the Mediterranean, “the sweet northern wind”, took a little of the sting from the torturing sun. Nevertheless, farmers working in the fields found indispensable shelter in simple reed huts. For the elite,

WHAT'S "WRONG" IN THIS SCENE?

Trees offered welcome shade and were often planted in the vicinity of the tombs for those visiting their dead relatives and friends. Not only did the living enjoyed the shade, but also the 'ba', one of the deceased's spiritual aspects, which was able to leave the tomb during the day. A ba is often depicted under a tree and/or in the vicinity of water.

This scene comes from the Luxor tomb of Irynefer (TT 290), who served under two kings: Seti I and Ramesses II, helping build their tombs in the Valley of the Kings.

Here Irynefer drinks from a pool of cool, fresh water beneath a date palm. It accompanies a spell for "drinking water in the necropolis" from the "Book of the Dead".

The Egyptians are famous for their art style; particularly the 'walk-like-an-Egyptian' way of portraying people. The same goes for outdoor scenes: everything was shown from its most recognisable angle—or the perspective in which they could add the most detail. This artist responsible for this scene in Irynefer's tomb applied some unique artistic licence to make it "work".

The pool is seen from above to display it fully. Irynefer however, is shown in profile, enjoying the refreshing water. Interestingly, his right arm ends in his left hand, to display the thumb clearly.

Irynefer kneels on the bank on the far side of the pool so as to not obscure the water. For balance, the palm tree grows on the near side of the pool; however to avoid having the tree block out Irynefer, the artist has it going behind him. Clever.



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when outside, sat in open, roofed structures, under sun shades where servants waved cooling air towards their master with an ostrich-feathered fan.

And the deceased? There was no reason that the creature comforts of their privileged earthly life need ever end; the tomb was materially and magically stocked with means similar to the ones enjoyed during their earthly life. Thus, for a pleasant afterlife, their "house of eternity" often featured various references to shade, coolness and lush vegetation. These could also represent the notions of life and regeneration.

The Egyptians lived in a world of images, not of

logic. To the modern mind, this may be confusing and contradictory. The sky could be depicted as a celestial cow, but also as a goddess, arched from horizon to horizon. Both existed happily next to each other. New ideas were added, but the old ones remained present, valid and also true. Our "or-or" was an "and-and" for the Egyptians.

This article deals with symbols used in tombs, which are often included as an image, not a reality. Today, a red rose means much more than merely a nice flower. Tomb decorations are chock-full with symbols that can also carry a double meaning.



THE LOTUS

The blue lotus especially was highly appreciated for its sweet scent, and it was valued as a powerful symbol for birth, life and rebirth.

The Egyptians believed that at dawn, the blue lotus rose from beneath the water's surface and opened its petals to the sun, which closed again at sunset before the flower retreated back into the water—a most suitable metaphor for birth, life, death and rebirth. Although the truth is a little less dramatic—the plant simply loses its old blooms and adds new ones each day—it still works as an image of resurrection.

The lotus was also a symbol of beauty. In the Chester Beatty Papyrus I (reign of Ramesses V, ca. 1145 B.C.), a love-sick suitor describes his beloved by saying, “Her fingers are like lotus flowers,” before going on to say, “Oh I faint at the sight of my deeply beloved’s buttocks and waist.”

On the far right is a detail from a text in the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), vizier under Thutmose III and Amenhotep II (18th Dynasty). It reads *sesheh shemu* which means “summer lily”.

Near right is a frieze in the tomb of Amenemheb (TT 278), a 20th Dynasty “herdsman of Amun-Re”. Under a row of narrow blue leaves hangs a string of bunches of grapes, and between them, blue lotus flowers.



KHEKER FRIEZE

Although the modern visitor may see the tomb paintings and reliefs as “just” decorated walls, a closer look shows that scenes often seem to be fixed on sheets of fabric. The knotted fringes of these sheets, the “kheker” frieze, hang from imitated wooden poles, forming the framework of a pergola. The long, often yellowish beams were ideal for hieroglyphic texts naming the tomb owner.

In this scene, the walls “hang” on a kheker frieze in the tomb of Sennefer (TT 96), who was mayor of the “Southern City” (Thebes) during the reign of Amenhotep II (Dynasty 18, ca. 1420 B.C.). In some tombs where the ceiling has an irregular surface it gives the impression of the wind playing with the decorated “fabric”, simulating a fresh and shady place for the dead.



GRAPES

In ancient Egypt wine was the privilege of royalty and the elite, so it made sense to have lush vines depicted in your tomb.

Red wine was a symbol for Osiris, who controlled the fate of the dead. As early as the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts Osiris was known as “Lord of Wine”, possibly in connection with the the boozy celebration of the arrival of the annual flood and the subsequent rebirth of life along the great river.

As late as the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.) tomb paintings in the Western Desert’s Dakhla Oasis show vines as a symbol of resurrection.

This ceiling of the tomb of Sennefer (TT 96), is very uneven, covered by a huge vine (just one!) with tendrils and bunches of grapes, very naturalistically depicted. It is easy to imagine being under a real pergola.



BUCRANIA

Here, the term “bucrania” (from the Greek *boukranion* meaning “cattle’s skull”) is used for a series of bulls’ heads captured in a frame of spirals. During the early New Kingdom several strong rulers extended Egypt’s wealth and influence by trade and conquest far beyond their own borders. Through contact with the Minoan culture, Egypt discovered the Cretan’s bull motif and adapted it by replacing the rosettes on the bulls’ foreheads with sun-disks between the animals’ horns.

The Minoan bulls fit well into Egyptian culture: since the earliest dynasties bulls played an important role in the Nile Valley. One of the king’s epithets was “strong bull” (*ka nakht*), and the ruler was often depicted with a ceremonial bull’s tail hanging from the back of his belt. This king-bull fusion connected the pharaoh with the prowess and strength of the wild bull, as well as its sexual vigour.

Below is a detail of a ceiling from the tomb of Inherkhou (TT 359). While the bull design is striking, it probably also afforded protection for the deceased.

Right: Not only King Senusret I (Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12), but also the gods Montu (middle) and Amun (right) wear a bull’s tail as a sign of strength. Part of a pillar of the “White Chapel” of Senusret, now in Karnak Temple’s Outdoor Museum.



ROSETTES AND SPIRALS

Designs like these help reinforce the feeling of the tomb chapel as a breezy outdoor pergola which has been covered by colourfully painted sheets of fabric.

Far left is the tomb ceiling of Inherkhau (TT 359), who served Kings Ramesses III and IV (20th Dynasty, ca. 1155 B.C.) as a foreman of the royal tomb builders at Deir el-Medina.

Near left is a ceiling design from the tomb of Amenhotep-Huy (TT 40), the Viceroy of Kush (Nubia) under Tutankhamun, ca. 1330 B.C.





THE BA

The decorations in a tomb were designed to not only give the deceased access to the afterlife, but also let them emerge into the sunshine each day and mingle with the living. This active part of the soul was the *ba*, shown as a bird (often a falcon) with a human head and the face of the deceased. The ba-bird could enjoy the warmth of the sun on its face, and feel the soft cool breeze of the north, and return these sensations to the mummy in its chamber.

This scene is Theban Tomb 359, that of Inherkhau, who was part of the sheltered community of elite craftsmen at Deir el-Medina under both Ramesses III and Ramesses IV in the 20th Dynasty. This was a tough time for Egypt. The world's first recorded strike took place when the royal tomb builders downed tools and staged a sit-in over non-payment of salaries (rations).

Despite the hardship Inherkhau managed to build two tombs. The first, smaller one, was intended for himself alone, while the larger one was built for his family.

On the right you can see Inherkhau in his finest clothes and wearing an elaborate wig, in adoration of his ba, perched on the roof of Inherkhau's tomb chapel. The hieroglyphic text provides "words for transforming into a living ba, to be able to enter and leave, and to remain at those places which he desires..."



THE KA

Mummification was all about preserving the body in as lifelike a manner as possible, as this was the “home” for their *ka*. The *ka* was seen as a kind of life force—a spiritual energy that powered the body.

Tutankhamun’s viceroy to Kush, Amenhotep-Huy, clearly wanted to guard against his *ka* being lost, so he had a scene included that would provide a perpetual offering of his *ka*. On the left is a lector priest wearing a leopard skin. Lector priests were responsible for reciting spells and hymns during rituals performed before the sacred cult statues of the gods. They also hired themselves out for private functions, such as funerals.

Here he presents Amenhotep-Huy with a *ka* symbol: two raised arms.

On the far left is an image from the tomb of Ay (WV 23), the New Kingdom pharaoh who succeeded Tutankhamun. Here we see the king’s divine essence, the royal *ka* (as indicated by the raised arms sign). It was during the annual Opet Festival at Luxor Temple that the king’s god-given authority was renewed, and his divine essence—his *ka*—was reborn, reconfirming his right to rule.



MA'AT

The last and most important test an ancient Egyptian faced on his journey to the afterlife was passing judgement before Osiris. This judgement culminated in the so-called “Weighing of the Heart”. First, the deceased denies that he is guilty of any wrongdoing via 42 Negative Confessions, and then his heart is balanced against *ma'at*, the feather of truth. If his heart is pure and the scales balanced then the deceased is declared “true of voice” and goes on to a glorious eternity. However, if the heart was heavy with dreadful deeds, then lurking nearby was a fearful goddess Ammit—eager to devour the heart and consign the deceased to oblivion.

Far left, from the tomb of Irynefer (TT 290), a beautifully painted image of *Ma'at*, the goddess of truth, cosmic balance and harmony.

Near left, also from TT 290, a row of gods is depicted with an ostrich feather. These are the judges hearing Irynefer’s “Negative Confession”, in which he claims to have lived according to *ma'at*, and not committed any wicked deeds during his earthly life. These misdemeanours are mentioned under the judges.



THE “EYE OF HORUS”

Pashedu was a foreman at Deir el-Medina. He likely oversaw the cutting of the royal tombs of Seti I and Ramesses II. In his spare time Pashedu created a colourful little tomb for himself, which includes this scene.

Here you can see the “Eye of Horus”, the *wadjet*, raising a bowl holding burning torches up to Osiris (not in the photo), symbolising the light of the sun, reborn in the east at dawn. Pashedu himself is presented humbly as a small figure, kneeling and raising his arms in adoration of the god.

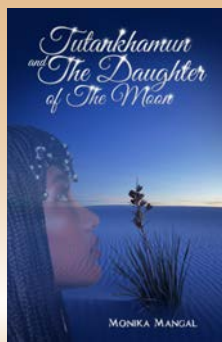
Our final tomb symbol is probably, along with the ubiquitous *ankh* ☥ sign for “life”, ancient Egypt’s most famous—and most powerful. The wadjet had the power to grant eternal life. The drop and spiral below the eye imitate the distinctive markings on a lanner falcon; the sacred bird associated with the god, Horus.

The story goes that Horus was badly wounded during one of his battles for the throne with Seth, his father’s murderer. Seth had won the day after Horus’ left eye was brutally plucked out in the fight. Using powerful magic, the eye was restored by Isis (or, in some stories, Hathor or Thoth). The “Eye of Horus” became a potent symbol for healing. A small wadjet amulet was even placed in the gash across Ramesses III’s throat after he succumbed to his injuries in the “harem conspiracy”. Enjoy Leslie D. Black’s story on the coup attempt from page 29.

TWO RIVETING NOVELS BY MONIKA MANGAL

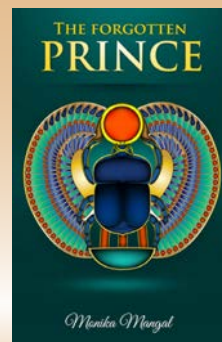
Tutankhamun and The Daughter of The Moon

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passion,
greed
and betrayal.
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QUEENS *of the* NILE *Part 2*

There is a veil of mystery over most New Kingdom queens. While it's true that women in ancient Egypt enjoyed liberties that were unmatched around the ancient world, the details of their lives away from the spotlight are blurry. The elegant images we see of her majesty are formal religious portraits commissioned by the pharaoh. There wasn't even a word for "queen"; she was the *hemet nesut* 𓆎𓅓, the "King's Wife".

Egypt was a world where balance was everything and harmony came in pairs: Upper and Lower Egypt, *kemet* (the Black Land) and *deshret* (the Red Land), the realms of the living and the dead (east and west), cyclical time and eternity, internal order versus foreign chaos. There were no bachelor pharaohs. A king needed a queen.

It is in this crucial role of divine consort that we mostly see the queens, gracefully performing sacred rituals to delight the gods and keep the cosmos humming, as well as dutifully furnishing the pharaoh with the next Horus king.

Occasionally, however, real life sneaks out, such as in the desperate letter sent by an 18th Dynasty royal to the king of the Hittites, begging for a husband:

"My husband has died, and I have no son. They say about you that you have many sons. You might give me one of your sons to become my husband. I would not wish to take one of my subjects as a husband... I am afraid."

"Queens of the Nile", a new exhibition at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, has pulled together a stunning collection of artefacts, many on loan from the Museo Egizio in Turin. It peeks beneath the official opulence, and shows what life was really like for Egypt's most celebrated queens.



UNIQUE

Ramesses II was obsessed with ensuring his name lasted forever. When the French removed the Luxor Obelisk in 1831 for re-erection in Place de la Concorde in Paris, they discovered that Ramesses II had carved his cartouches on the obelisk's pedestal before the obelisk was lowered onto it. It would remain there, hidden, for the next 3,000 years. In complete contrast is the tomb of his wife, Nefertari. Her tomb may be the only decorated royal monument from Ramesses II's long reign that doesn't bear his name anywhere.

“

The Queen's Valley does not demand a visit except from travelers who have abundant leisure.

These words were written in a 1902 guidebook to Egypt and Sudan. Of course, things changed greatly just two years later with the discovery of the stunningly-decorated tomb of Queen Nefertari (QV 66).

Today, the tomb is quarantined from most visitors, most of the time. For the long term survival of the tomb's fragile decorations, just a privileged few get to spend a handful of minutes inside each day.

While Nefertari's name, contained in a cartouche, was included in the tomb (KV 7) of her husband, Ramesses II (just once, between the third and fourth corridors), the total absence of any reference to the

king in Nefertari's tomb has long puzzled researchers. As early as 1909, the Scottish traveller, Reverend Colin Campbell, noted the absence of the great king from her tomb.

At first thought, one would think that such a close association could only bolster a woman's status, which would be enjoyed for eternity.

Nefertari isn't alone in being alone in her tomb. None of the Ramesside royal women's tombs in the Valley of the Queens include any reference to their husbands or fathers. This seems to have been a long-standing practice, going back over a thousand years. Since the reign of King Sneferu (Old Kingdom, 4th Dynasty, ca. 2600 B.C.), and almost without exception, royal husbands are deliberately omitted from the tomb of their wives.

Various theories have been put forward to explain why. Convention dictates that the owner of a tomb should be represented more prominently than others—both in frequency and in relative size. However, this would have seen the king shown less prominently than his wife, which would be unthinkable. Some have suggested that the omission may be to avoid the king's status overshadowing that of the tomb owner: his mere

presence putting her in a subordinate role. Was there a taboo against the king appearing in the tombs of lower-status family members? Perhaps it was a sign of the woman's strong character and independence? Or evidence of marital strife?

It is unlikely to be the case that Ramesses II went missing simply because he out-ranked his queen. There are plenty of instances where kings appear in the tombs of lesser-status family members. For example, in the tombs of Khaemwaset and Amenherkhepshef, the sons of Ramesses III (20th Dynasty), the king is shown introducing the young prince to the gods. Ramesses II himself features throughout KV5, the enormous mausoleum for many of his sons, also mediating on behalf of the princes. Why wouldn't the king also introduce his wife to the gods?

In the last issue of *Nile Magazine* (#5), it was wondered whether Ramesses had his name omitted as a caring act, in order to dedicate the "house of eternity" entirely to his wife. While the true romantics among us would love to think so, a clue to the real reason can be seen in the colour of Nefertari's skin.

One artistic convention in Egyptian art was the difference in colour between men's and women's skin. In carved and painted reliefs and statues, a woman's skin was painted a creamy yellow, whereas for men it was a reddish-brown. This is thought to not only show which gender traditionally spent more time outdoors in the sun, but also highlighted the fundamental Egyptian belief in *ma'at*. The two skin shades distinguished men and women as opposites and so supported the concept of a balanced cosmos.

However, but for a single exception, Nefertari isn't depicted in her tomb with pale skin; she is shown with a range of more masculine, reddish tones.

Just like men, Egyptian women were given the title Osiris and assimilated to that god to achieve rebirth. However, to become Osiris, a woman had one extra hurdle to deal with—she had to temporarily become a man.

Throughout Nefertari's tomb are phrases such as "Osiris Nefertari" and "Justified with Osiris" to emphasise her transformation into Osiris and sharing in his resurrection in the afterlife. It was because of Nefertari's necessary gender fluidity that her husband goes missing from the tomb.

Once she had become Osiris, Nefertari was ready for rebirth into the afterlife as a woman.

Kingship was a traditionally male role, and so according to their ideology, Ramesses would have made a more appropriate Osiris. Queens were usually associated more with Hathor.

The king's presence in the tomb would force Nefertari back into the traditionally supportive, feminine role as the king's opposite, as well as highlight the

PHOTO: MUSEO EGIZIO, TURIN. Cat: S. 5162



CURIOUS

The reason why this faience knob or pommel inscribed with the name of King Ay, Tutankhamun's successor, was found in QV 66 remains a mystery. Ay had died decades before Nefertari was born.

It is possible that Nefertari was a surviving descendant of the 18th Dynasty Theban royal family which included such notables as Thutmose III, Queen Hatshepsut, the great Amenhotep III, "renegade" pharaoh Akhenaten, his wife Nefertiti, and the "boy king", Tutankhamun.

Ramesses II's family came from the Nile Delta, so it may have been that in marrying his son to Nefertari, Seti I was keen on giving the future pharaoh legitimacy in the eyes of the Thebans. Although it was an arranged marriage, no other wives of Ramesses II featured as prominently in the life of the great king.

traditional, sexual roles of their relationship. This would prevent her from not only descending into the afterlife as Osiris, but also "coming forth by day" as the sun-god, Ra.

By excluding himself, Ramesses was giving Nefertari the opportunity to achieve eternal life.

The next issue of *Nile Magazine* (#7) features a new exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum titled "A Woman's Afterlife: Gender Transformation in Ancient Egypt". The exhibition explores further the idea of gender transformation in ancient Egypt.



PHOTO: OLE HAAPT / NY CARLSBERG GLYPTOTEK COPENHAGEN, Cat. AEIN 1663



When the chick is in the egg, speaking in the shell, you [Aten] give him breath within it to cause him to live; and when you have made his appointed time for him. . . he comes out of the egg to speak at his appointed time and goes on his two legs. . . .”

The Great Hymn to the Aten

Few other pharaohs seem to have burned with the religious fire that drove Akhenaten.

This stunning quartzite portrait of a royal princess, around 15 cm (6 inches) tall, probably comes from Akhetaten (modern Amarna), the shiny new city founded by Akhenaten around 1346 B.C.

The pharaoh had abandoned the gods of his ancestors and the powerful priests of Karnak in favour of a formerly fairly minor aspect of the sun, Aten, and a new home, halfway between Memphis and Thebes.

Akhenaten's attack on Egypt's traditional gods prompted a powerful backlash after his death, where his images were attacked with zeal. The plan was to wipe his name off the planet and deny him a place in the afterlife. However, statuary like this, bearing his distinctive Amarna style, have seen Akhenaten become, in modern times, one of the most studied and debated pharaohs of all.

This statue head is thought to portray Meritaten, the eldest of Akhenaten and Nefertiti's six daughters. After Akhenaten's reign, Meritaten became the new king's leading royal lady (Great Royal Wife). She appears in an Amarna tomb beside her "husband", Smenkhare. Dr. Nicholas Reeves is one of the leading advocates of "King" Smenkhare being none other than Nefertiti under a new name (see page 26 for more on this cloudy period in Egypt's history).

The piece is a great example of some of the qualities that "Amarna Art" has become famous for: a sloping forehead, sensual lips, jutting chin and long, narrow eyes, as well as a peculiarly elongated head.

It is the shape of the head that gets the most attention. Was it an artistic style for religious purposes, or did Akhenaten's daughters really look this way?

Theories to explain this unusual head shape have ranged from the bandaging of the royal children's heads while they were infants (with still soft skulls) to deliberately deform them, through to a suite of severe medical abnormalities of which the king might have suffered, and passed onto his children.

It is true that the mummy of Tutankhamun (Akhenaten's son and Meritaten's nephew) certainly has a long head. However, it is still within the accepted boundaries of "normal".

It may be that Amarna's elongated heads are simply an overemphasised treatment of a royal family trait. Highlighting a unique feature like this may have been a sign of noble birth.

We may never really know the truth, but as the "Amarna style" began to appear only after the third year of Akhenaten's reign, when he began worshipping Aten, it is likely to be a religious statement.

One creation story told that the sun god, Re, was born of an egg laid upon the mound of creation that first rose from the primeval waters. The light of Re banished chaos and created the world. The egg became a symbol of the divine origin of life.

When Amarna statues, like the one opposite, are viewed from the back, it is hard to ignore that the sculptor seems to have deliberately given the head the shape of an egg.

Carved into the tall cliffs surrounding the arc of desert on which Akhetaten was founded are the tombs of the king's courtiers. One of these, Ay, went on to become pharaoh after the reign of Tutankhamun was cut short. Carved into the wall of the entrance corridor of Ay's tomb are 13 columns of hieroglyphs. These make up a long prayer, supposedly written by Akhenaten himself, called "The Great Hymn to the Aten".

Perhaps it's no coincidence that The Great Hymn to the Aten describes a potent symbol of youth and rebirth—the hatching of an egg by the command of Aten (a part of it can be read at the top of this page).

It may be that in the royal statuary, Akhenaten exaggerated a slight family trait to create a family of "egg-heads" that would forever share in the daily cycle of the Aten's divine creation.

This statue most likely came from the same Amarna workshop responsible for the famous painted bust in Berlin of Meritaten's mother, Nefertiti.



PHOTO: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES, LEIDEN



Merenptah watched his older brothers die, one by one. Many of them had been crown prince, primed for the throne when their father, Ramesses II, became one with Osiris. However, Ramesses was in no particular hurry and outlived 12 of his sons. Merenptah was son number 13, and was already over 60 (a great age in Egypt) when Ramesses finally died in his 90s (ca. 1213 B.C.).

What happened next is debatable. A decade after Merenptah's accession a new pharaoh was on the throne: Merenptah's son, Seti II. Or maybe it was a rival named Amenmesse. Or perhaps it was both Seti II *and* Amenmesse. It seems that not long after Prince Seti was crowned king, Amenmesse rebelled and claimed Thebes and Upper Egypt as his own. Their reigns may have overlapped for a while before Seti II swept in and ousted Amenmesse to regain his rule over the Two Lands.

In the midst of a family feud and with the line of kingship still in question, it is little wonder that we have scant information on Queen Takhat.

The above decoration was copied in the early 1800s by Italian Egyptologist Ippolito Rosellini. It came from the tomb of Amenmesse (KV 10) in the Valley of the Kings, where it seems Takhat was buried. The inscription reads in part, "King's Great Mother".

It seems likely that Takhat was the wife of King Merenptah, or even Seti II, which would make Seti and Amenmesse half-brothers in the first instance, or father and son in the second. Either way, there would have been no shortage of 19th Dynasty family dramas in Takhat's world.

With so little known about Takhat, any new information that Egyptologists can glean about her life will add greatly to our knowledge of this royal daughter, wife and mother.



These delightful little ebony statuettes depicting Queen Tiy and King Amenhotep III are just 6 cm (2.3 inches) high and were found in the ruins of the king's harem palace at Gurob in the Faiyum.

Were the harems of ancient Egypt the opulent sexual paradises many imagine, full of nubile playthings for the pharaoh? Not really.

Over the years the image of the harem has been powered by 19th century visions of the Turkish Sultans. In ancient Egypt, the king's harem was simply a designated royal women's and children's quarters, off-limits to most men.

While luxurious by everyday standards, life was probably rather tedious for the women. As Egyptologist Charlotte Booth explains, "Excavations at the Gurob harem palace show that the women residing there were engaged in textile production and effectively worked for a living."

So why have so many wives? Simply put, status, politics and progeny. It cost a lot of money to keep many wives, so maintaining a harem was a strong statement of wealth and power.

For the kings of Egypt, like the rulers of European countries in days gone by, marriage was often more of a political arrangement than a celebration of true love. Kings would marry foreign princess or the daughters

of influential families to secure allegiances and build political and trading bonds.

Succession was a key driver to having a number of consorts. When the king's Great Royal Wife couldn't deliver a bouncing crown prince, one of the lesser harem wives might.

"As one would expect," says Booth, "when a number of women are housed together, knowing their power lies in their connection to and popularity with the king, or the production of a son and heir, there was a certain element of unrest. Nowhere is this unrest clearer than on the so-called Turin Judicial Papyrus. This document records the trial of Ramesses III's wife, Tiye, their son, Pentawere, and a number of court officials who conspired to murder Ramesses III with the aim of Pentawere being catapulted to the throne." (See page 29 for the story of the Harem Conspiracy.)

The Turin Judicial Papyrus, some five metres long, is on loan to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (RMO) in Leiden for the "Queens of the Nile" exhibition. Dr. Olaf Kaper, the curator of the exhibition says that "[it] has been specially restored for its display in Leiden. Its shocking revelations are contrasted with the opulence of life at court."

"Queens of the Nile" is showing in Leiden until April 17, 2017.

EXHIBITIONS

U.K.

ANIMAL MUMMIES REVEALED



World Museum, Liverpool

Showing until 26th February 2017

The U.K.'s first exhibition devoted to why the Egyptians mummified animals and gave them to their gods as gifts.

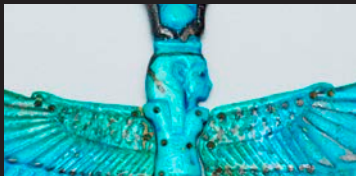
THE TOMB ANCIENT EGYPTIAN BURIAL



National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

31st March 2017 – 3rd September 2017
Charts the use of a tomb that was built for a New Kingdom police chief and was reused until Roman times.

OBJECTS COME TO LIFE AN ETON MYERS EXHIBITION



University of Birmingham

Showing until mid 2017

Explores the importance of private collections of ancient artefacts. Every artefact has their own story to tell.

EUROPE

QUEENS OF THE NILE ROYAL LADIES OF ANCIENT EGYPT



Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden

Showing until 17th April 2017

The most celebrated queens from the Golden Age of Egyptian history: the New Kingdom.

OSIRIS EGYPT'S SUNKEN MYSTERIES



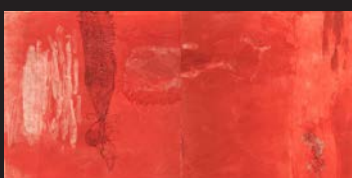
Rietberg Museum, Zurich

10th February 2017 – 16th July 2017

The "Sunken Cities" exhibition moves to Switzerland. The submerged treasures of Thonis-Heracleion revealed.

EGYPT IN THE ART OF SUSAN OSGOOD

(Ägypten in der Kunst von Susan Osgood)



Agyptisches Museum, Georg Steindorff, University of Leipzig

5th May 2017 – 27th August 2017

The joining of Art and Archaeology, the two worlds of Oriental Institute artist, Susan Osgood.



QUEENS OF THE NILE

Queen Ahmose Nefertari.
From Deir el-Medina.
Museo Egizio, Turin.
Cat. C. 1369

PHARAOH LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT



Ausstellungszentrum Lokschuppen, Rosenheim

24th March 2017 – 17th December 2017
Features six significant pharaohs: Khufu, Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Akhenaten, Amenhotep II and Ramesses II.

CHAMPOLLION IN TIME



Musée Champollion, Figeac

Showing until 4th May 2017

Celebrating Figeac's most famous son, Jean-François Champollion, the decipherer of the hieroglyphic system.



MUMMIES OF THE WORLD

Cat mummy, Roman Period
Israel Museum, Jerusalem.
Buffalo and Erie County
Historical Society

U.S.

A WOMAN'S AFTERLIFE GENDER TRANSFORMATION IN ANCIENT EGYPT



Brooklyn Museum
Ongoing

Women had an extra hurdle to deal with before they could access the afterlife: they had to first become a man.

MAGIC IN THE ANCIENT WORLD



Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
Showing until August 2017

Explores magical objects, words, and rituals used in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome

DIVINE FELINES CATS OF ANCIENT EGYPT



McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture, Knoxville

3rd February 2017 – 7th May 2017
Explores the role of cats and other felines in Egyptian mythology, kingship, and everyday life.

MUMMIES OF THE WORLD THE EXHIBITION



Houston Museum of Natural Science

Showing until 29th May 2017

What secrets do mummies hold? The largest exhibition of real mummies and related artifacts ever assembled.

LOST EGYPT ANCIENT SECRETS, MODERN SCIENCE



Museum of Discovery and Science, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

4th February 2017 – 30th April 2017
An interactive exhibition featuring authentic artefacts as well as scans and forensic facial reconstructions.

MUMMIES OF THE WORLD THE EXHIBITION



Houston Museum of Natural Science

Showing until 29th May 2017
What secrets do mummies hold? The largest exhibition of real mummies and related artifacts ever assembled.

REST OF THE WORLD

THE GOLDEN PHAROHS & PYRAMIDS TREASURES FROM THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO



Toyama Regional Museum, Toyama, Japan

13th January 2017 – 26th March 2017

Features over 100 items from the vast collection in Cairo's Egyptian Museum, focussing on the Old Kingdom.

EGYPTIAN MUMMIES EXPLORING ANCIENT LIVES



Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

Showing until 25th April 2017

A British Museum touring exhibition. See beneath the wrappings with the latest CT scanning technology.


A MUMMY IN JERUSALEM SECRETS OF THE AFTERLIFE



Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Showing until April 2017
This exhibition is built around a priest named Iret-hor-iru, Israel's only mummy, displayed in its original coffin.



ABOVE: The lovely Werener, sister-in-law of Ramose, vizier during the reigns of Amenhotep III and his famous son, the “unorthodox” pharaoh, Akhenaten. Keen-eyed readers may notice the  behind Werener’s back. It’s the hieroglyph for the letter “M”: Mick Oakey’s “signature”.

On the right is the original relief of Werener in TT 55, at Luxor.



© JEFFREY ROSS BURZACOTT

NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW what it is like to hand-carve all of those curls. In fact, Mick Oakey from West Sussex in England might be one of the few people on earth who really does.

In his spare time away from publishing *The Aviation Historian* magazine and being Vice-Chairman of the Sussex Egyptology Society, Mick pulls out a set of chisels and sits down in front of a fine-grained piece of stone. What he creates is simply stunning: replica pieces of ancient Egyptian artwork from temples and tombs.

The sublime figure of Werener (above) from the New Kingdom tomb chapel of Ramose (TT 55) at Luxor is his most ambitious piece to date. Mick says it took him about a year to pluck up the courage to tackle the elaborate wig with its subtle braided tresses. “But,” he adds, “it was lovely to be able to ‘repair’ the damage to the face.”



Mick Oakey in his garden working on a relief of Sekhmet from the Temple of Horus and Sobek at Kom Ombo.

So, how did all this begin?

Since 1985 my wife Lynn and I have frequently holidayed in Egypt, and I always like to bring back something that looked convincingly like an ancient object, such as a shabti or relief carving. Over the years I noticed the good handmade objects were being replaced by moulded resin pieces from China. I said to my wife that I could do better myself. She said, “Go on then!”

How close to the ancient techniques do you get?

Pretty close, I think. I use tungsten-carbide chisels rather than copper ones (copper chisels need sharpening every few strokes, but life is too short). When I compare

my carvings to the originals, the tool marks tend to appear in the same places. And when things go a bit wrong (e.g. occasional individual elements of a wig spalling away), close examination shows my ancient counterpart had the same problem on the original!

Do you feel a closer understanding of the daily life of an ancient Egyptian relief carver?

Yes, I have an intimate understanding of their backache, shoulder-ache, finger-fatigue and dustiness! But also the supreme satisfaction of a carving coming alive from what began as a featureless slab of stone. The ancient Egyptian word for sculptor, *s'ankh* |𓂏|𓂏|𓂏|𓂏|, "he makes it live", sums it up.

You can see more of Mick's fine carvings at iret.co.uk.

FAR RIGHT: One of Mick Oakey's replica reliefs: the 18th Dynasty's King Thutmose IV (ca. 1390 B.C.) from his Peristyle Hall in the Karnak Open Air Museum. The original carving is in the small circle: the accuracy that Mick is able to achieve is remarkable.



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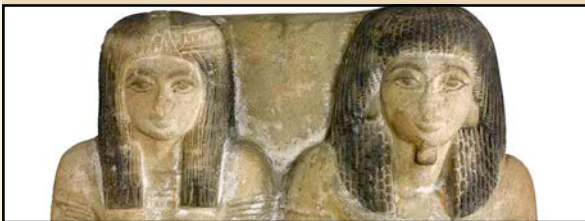
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COMING UP



CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLES: PART TWO

The oldest skyscraper in New York. Paris and London had their obelisks, and America was now determined to have its own. Another chapter from **Bob Brier's** great new book, "Cleopatra's Needles".



THE TOMB

A new exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland tells the story of a tomb that was built around 1290 B.C. for a New Kingdom police chief, and reused for over 1000 years.



TOMB SECURITY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

The thieves usually won in the end, but that didn't stop wealthy tomb owners from devising ingenious ways to try and outwit them. **Reg Clark** explores the how and why of ancient Egyptian tomb security.



WHAT THE MEDIA GETS WRONG

Where do we start? **Lindsay Kriz** explores some of the common myths and misconceptions about ancient Egypt, popularised by the media: the pharaoh's curse, slaves, Cleopatra's beauty, and yes, even aliens.

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LOOKING BACK

Vintage Images of Ancient Egypt



FROM THE EGYPTOLOGY LIBRARY OF PEGGY JOY

IT'S HARD TO BLAME THEM FOR BEING CURIOUS. When Howard Carter broke through the door to Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, he gasped at the shimmering "wonderful things" inside. But then, in an amazing feat of self-restraint, plugged the hole and waited dutifully for the official opening the next day.

Well, that's the official story. In reality, three of those present: Carter, his sponsor, Lord Carnarvon, and Carnarvon's daughter, Lady Evelyn, gave into temptation. They squeezed their way through the narrow opening and poked about inside the tomb—even reaching the king's burial chamber.

What went on that day was illegal of course, and referred to only obliquely in letters (Lady Evelyn thanked Carter for taking her into that "most holy place").

Was this the only secret that Lady Evelyn shared with Howard Carter? In a word, yes. Modern filmmakers seem to enjoy offering Lady Evelyn, as "a woman in Howard Carter's life" (such as the current TV mini-series, "Tutankhamun").

Truth be told, however, the single most important woman in his life was his niece Phyllis Walker, the daughter of his only sister, Amy. Phyllis spent much time with her uncle in Egypt from a young age, and is here depicted with him in 1931, at (we believe) the London Zoo.

After Howard Carter's death in 1939, Phyllis was bequeathed nearly all of her uncle's estate, including his personal papers and photographs. The latter were carefully protected throughout the long war years, and in 1945, at war's end, she donated them to the Griffith Institute at the University of Oxford. Phyllis clearly couldn't part with everything however; one of the photos she kept was this one of herself with her favorite uncle.

(Grateful thanks to William Joy for his incredible research skills.)

This fabulous new tour is a thorough exploration of pyramids, especially on the Giza Plateau. We have special permits from the Ministry of Antiquities allowing access to some spectacular sites.

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THE GREAT PYRAMIDS

DEPARTING 1st APRIL 2017

We also have a private permit to visit the Workers' Village and learn about the lives of the very people who built these amazing monuments. We take time to explore the plateau fully and hear Colin's theories on the earliest use of the site, including the age of the Great Sphinx.

An excursion to Ain Sokhna on the Red Sea enables us to view the galleries that once housed ancient boats and supplies dating to the 4th Dynasty, including the incredible Khufu Papyri found in 2013.



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